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THE RAMAYANA OF TULSIDAS

T&2 R.

ATKINS

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गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय, हरिद्वार
पुस्तकालय

विषय संख्या R
२१५.५१२
पुस्तक संख्या T४२R.1
आगत पंजिका संख्या

पुस्तक पर किसी प्रकार का निशान लगाना वर्जित है। कृपया १५ दिन से अधिक समय तक पुस्तक अपने पास न रखें। २१०२

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विषय संख्या २१५.५१२
T४२R.1
लेखक.....
आख्या The Ramayana of Tulsi Das
आ०सं० २१०२
पुस्तकालय
गुरुकुल कांगड़ी विश्वविद्यालय

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पुस्तकालय

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हरिद्वार

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वर्ग संख्या 294.592 T82R.1 आ. सं. 2902

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THE RAMAYANA

COMPILED

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

VOL. I

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THE RAMAYANA OF TULSIDAS

Rendered into English Verse

by

The Rev. A. G. ATKINS

[In Two Volumes]

VOL. I

Childhood and Youth. Events in Avadh.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
New Delhi

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It was in February 1951 that the Rev. A. G. Atkins first wrote to me about his verse translation of the *Tulsi Ramayana*. He did so at the instance of our common friend, the Rev. J. Z. Hodge, whom my father and I had met and got to like in Champaran in 1916. Mr. Atkins had spent a good part of his life in the noble enterprise and was feeling rather disappointed at not being able to interest any publisher in it. It was, he realized, in every way a great responsibility, but he hoped I would be prepared to undertake it.

I might have dissuaded any Indian wanting to render the epic into English verse. But here was one whose mother-tongue was English presenting me with a complete translation devotedly done of a book representing the best that India has to offer. He was, besides, a missionary who had known and lived in India. I could not have wished for a better combination. All I had to decide was whether his approach to the great task he had accomplished had been in the right spirit and whether I could commit the Hindustan Times organization to the moral responsibility of placing this version before the English-knowing world. I was more than satisfied with the diligence and consecration—to use the word he applies to Tulsidas—the translator had brought to bear on his work. I, therefore, sent sample stanzas to a number of friends and scholars seeking their advice. The consensus of opinion was in favour of publication. Even so, it had to be the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas to persuade me prayerfully to undertake the task on behalf of the Hindustan Times.

In the production of these volumes, I have had the unstinting co-operation of several of my colleagues. Should the sales leave any surplus it will be devoted to the cause of propagation of the *Ramayana* which probably is the strongest single force that binds the Indian masses together.

Recitation of verses from the *Ramayana* was part of the routine of our expanded family in South Africa. My father was fond of repeating them aloud to us. He particularly made us memorize *soratha* 1 and *chaupai* 2 of the Invocation, *dohas* 20 to 26 of the Salutation to Rama, especially *doha* 22, in Book I, and *chhand* 13, in praise of Bharat, in Book II. A verse he often quoted is *doha* 112 in Book I. These are but a few of the innumerable gems that scintillate the *Ramayana*.

In his last years the reading of the *Ramayana* was an indispensable part of Gandhiji's evening prayer service. The practice is now kept up at the Friday prayers at Rajghat in Delhi.

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The language of Tulsidas is not easily followed without special study. Those more familiar with English than with the North Indian dialect used in the *Ramayana* will, therefore, find the Rev. Atkins' translation extremely helpful in understanding the original. I have myself profited by it. Indeed, the Atkins version of the *Ramayana* gives me the greatest satisfaction. The exigencies of rhyme and of Tulsidas's metre forms which, in the true spirit of scholarly service, the translator has adapted with remarkable success impart the flavour of the original epic to the poem in English. Some may regard it as unorthodox from the strict English literary point of view. But I for one like it for that very reason. It is Tulsidas who is presented and whom Mr. Atkins is interested in presenting. The reader will know how to make allowances, for here there is no scope for irreverence.

One of those who encouraged me in this venture was my friend the late Parasnath Sinha. He belonged to the land of Sita, the consort of Rama. He had been looking forward keenly to the completion of this work. To his memory I dedicate this act of faith.

DEVADAS GANDHI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES,
New Delhi.
December, 1954

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FOREWORD

When the Purushottama who is the object of worship in the Vedas agreed to be born in this world to go through the sufferings and privations of human life on earth and to destroy the evil forces that had attained dominance, the Vedas also simultaneously came to take shape as the *Ramayana* of Valmiki. This is the reverential tribute paid by every devout Hindu before he begins the daily reading of the *Ramayana* of Valmiki:

वेदवेद्ये परे पुंसि जाते दशरथात्मजे ।
वेदः प्राचेतसादासीत्साक्षाद्रामायणात्मना ॥

It may be said without exaggeration that when the study of classical Sanskrit decayed, Valmiki came down among us as Tulsidas in the North and Kamban in the South. Through Tulsidas the Vedas took shape as the *Rama-Charita-Manasa*. Just as Shri Rama was more human than Varaha or Nrisimha or Vamana, so is Tulsi's *Ramayana* a *bhakti*-infused *avatara* of Valmiki's epic, fitter for the elevation of the mortals of today who, alas, are far down below the level of the *rishis* that were enraptured to hear Lava and Kusha sing the great epic of Valmiki.

The first verse of the invocation for the daily devotional reading of *Ramayana* is more applicable to Tulsidas and his *Ramayana* than even to Valmiki and if we pay this tribute to the spiritual son, it would not be an offence to the father that gave to us the great and elevating epic story of the Prince of Ayodhya:

कूजन्तं राम रामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम् ।
आरुह्य कविताशाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकिकोकिलम् ॥

Who can fail to be elevated in spirit and walk in the straight path to Heaven that has heard the story of Rama as told by Tulsidas and has let the sweet music of it vibrate his inner being?

श्रृण्वन्रामकथानादं को न याति परां गतिम् ।

Tulsidas made his vision of God into a concrete reality for the commonest of men around him. Tulsidas could have made himself as grand or obscure as any philosopher, ancient or modern; for he had learning enough for it, but he was too pious to lose himself in that manner. His great love of

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the common folk enabled him to produce a work that has stood the test of centuries like a rock among philosophers, *pandits* and lowly men and women.

Mr Atkins' monumental work and his Introduction are a revelation of hope for those who desire to see all the great religions of mankind come together. Here is a pious citizen of Britain and a Christian who, after having spent as many as ten good years of his life to make the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas available to English-speaking people for loving study, has emerged as true a *bhakta* as any among our own people. Although he does not refer to it, his service is not only to English-speaking people but also to that very large number of Hindus in India who do not speak the Hindi language and to whom English has become a very familiar medium. The English rendering of the epic of Rama done by Mr Atkins will enable this class of people to be tuned to the great piety that enriches the life of their Hindi-speaking brethren and sisters.

Westerners may find it difficult to reconcile belief in the theory of *Maya* with that sense of moral responsibility which is essential for right conduct. Human sin under God's rule is a mystery that truly passeth understanding. Any "explanation" is bound to be unsatisfactory, although when one is brought up in that explanation from childhood it may acquire a familiar ring that may pass for logical satisfaction. The Christian doctrine is a mystic blend of man's free will with the omniscience and omnipotence of God. The fact is there, sin and the unmistakable desire at the same time to be free from it. The Hindu theory of *Maya* and *Karma* satisfies the Hindu mind. According to this, man's sin is a part of the *Leela* or play of God, but the law of *Karma* makes the play a dreadful reality, as long as it lasts, and sin cannot be worked out except through right action which of course includes genuine penitence and prayer.

It is not easy either for a nation or for an individual to rise again after a fall. It requires much work and much steadiness of purpose and much guidance. But more than work and steady purpose and guidance from outside, the inner being must be spiritualized. It is only then that mutual trust and co-operation and courage become possible and even easy. It is the root of the matter. A million people that do not believe one another and therefore do not help one another in true and effective manner cannot produce any result. Man-power does not count when there is no co-operation. Greedy men that do not believe in God and do not trust one an-

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other and will not be good except under supervision and except when they cannot evade legal authority will pull in different directions, and the total result of all effort after an infinitude of waste will be but small. Purify the inner being and produce piety and honesty—then the effort of each will be added unto every other's and the harvest will be plenty. If all men will begin reading Tulsi, they cannot help becoming good again and thereby strong and brave and happy as a people. May the story of Rama and Sita, the tears of Rama's great brother Bharata, the devotion of Lakshmana and the perfection of Hanuman inspire and elevate our souls.

Madras,
July, 1954

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIRTY-FIVE years ago I began to read the *Ramayana* or the *Rama-Charita-Manasa* of Tulsidas; it was a task set in connection with the language study and examinations required of a missionary. But I soon became interested in the poem with its moving story, vivid pictures and devout thought; fascinated too with the easy swinging rhythm and music of the language. I had become somewhat familiar with this type of language and poetic form by the use of *bhajans* (religious lyrics) in our regular worship. When I began to study the *Ramayana* I found great help in understanding and interpreting passages from the prose version of F. S. Growse, first published more than seventy-five years ago. But it was evident that Growse did no more than give, very prosily, the meaning of the passages, and did not at all represent the literary quality and music of Tulsidas. So when, about twelve years ago, the Rev. George Briggs, D.D., formerly a missionary in India, then a teacher in Drew University, U.S.A., suggested that I try to put Tulsidas's great work into English verse, I was gripped by the idea. Though at first I hardly thought it possible, a beginning was made and I soon became keenly interested in it.

I have tried to give varied metres somewhat comparable to those of Tulsidas, changing as he changes—which breaks monotony in reading; also rhyme where he gives it, and language that is clear and simple in verse form. Some friends have seen portions and have encouraged me with commendation—notably my wife to whom the whole has been read aloud (knowing her, I can say that her approval is not due merely to the fact that it is her husband's work; if it were not of value or fitness, she would have said so frankly); also two friends of my early days in India, now retired, whom I have always respected as my *gurus*, both of them literary-minded and versed in Hindi—the Rev. J. Z. Hodge, D.D., and the Rev. P. O. Wynd. It has been a long effort, as usually no more than small portions of time could be spared from a busy life; and since the rhythm and rhyme had to be carefully thought out, it meant that much more time had to be spent over a passage than otherwise—often one couplet taking an hour of thinking. Ten years have thus been spent at the work, but I have enjoyed it. Now it is offered to the English-speaking people of India and of other countries in the hope

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that they will enjoy a literary masterpiece of India, though presented imperfectly and at second-hand, and that through it they will come to understand something more of the background of the faith and thought of a large number of India's people.

The *Rama-Charita-Manasa* is much more than the life-story of a great figure in Indian history, Prince (later King) Ramachandra of Avadh or Ayodhya, a kingdom in North India. Tulsidas takes the foundation of his work from the Sanskrit *Ramayana* of Valmiki, which belongs to a period at least 2,000 years earlier and which tells of this great figure of many centuries earlier still. Already in Valmiki a great deal of mythology is woven round the figures of Rama and Sita, especially in what are commonly regarded as additions to Valmiki's actual work; but there it is not the figure of a divine incarnation as later understood, holding the earnest, loving religious faith of men as Lord and Deliverer. Tulsidas takes the outline of that story, changes many of the episodes, omits some and adds others, and uses this to express his own loving devotion (*bhakti*), and his message to men concerning this as fundamental in true religion. He adds much from his own background of theological thought and religious practice, adds also mythological material to strengthen his message and deepen its impression. It is in this that the chief significance of his work lies, so that it is much more than history or biography.

Here one reads the longing and faith of the more earnest and spiritual-minded Hindu, as contrasted with the worldly-minded and godless on the one hand and the formalist or abstruse philosopher on the other. Tulsidas condemns the former in unmistakable terms for their materialism, selfishness and sensualism. He includes the latter in his picture of current Hinduism, and makes some concessions to religious and social ritual as of value, in some cases essential (*e.g.* veneration of Brahmans and observance of caste rules as religious duty); he also acknowledges the Pantheistic Impersonal teachings of the Hindu philosopher, with the practice of abstraction in contemplation. He especially emphasises the doctrine of *Maya* (Illusion) as a divine expression and activity, in all material and personal diversity—which is delusive and unreal; all things are due to this, specially man's offences and mistakes with their disastrous consequences. Salvation with him is from the consequences of wrong action resulting in birth

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after birth, and may be salvation either to the condition of cessation of personal being in the Supreme Impersonal (Brahma), or—which is more desirable in his message—to a place forever in personal bliss in the Realm of Rama. But all else fades into insignificance before the things of the highest and ultimate value, true devotion in heart and life to the Supreme conceived in Personal Form—here Lord Vishnu incarnate as Ramachandra (also named Raghubir, Raghubar, Raghupati, head of the family of his ancestor, Raghu of Avadh). With this goes a worthy outlook in moral ideals and religious relationships. All impurity, untruth and jealous enmity are condemned. Tolerance in religious difference and variety is urged, even while presenting Rama as Supreme. It is noteworthy that here is hardly any reference to Krishna, the Lord of the *Bhagavad Gita,* around whom with incarnation mythology are woven many sensual episodes (by some interpreted as figurative). There are many references to Siva, but it is always with respect and with condemnation of the partisan bitterness that has marked many phases and groups in Hinduism, but is contrary to its true spirit. Tulsidas also shows little respect for the lesser gods of Hindu mythology, especially Indra, greatly revered in Vedic times. He honours formally the Hindu Triad—Brahma the Creator (a rather vague figure); Vishnu the Preserver (conceived as incarnate to meet vital emergencies); and Siva the Destroyer (who tells the story of Rama with deep reverence). But all through there is the conception, which Tulsidas uses all his powers to express, that it is the Supreme Spirit who is incarnate in Rama and who claims supreme devotion.

Thus we find expressed sincerely and fervently love for the Supreme and Divine One, the outreach of faith and devotion after some personal concrete form of God in whom faith may rest. The figure laid hold upon by faith inspiring imagination is the ancient hero, an ideal human and royal figure such as one comes across in the dim past of other peoples, *e.g.,* Saint George and King Arthur in the early history of England, the king-priest Melchizedek and the idealised David of the Hebrews. But here this figure, Ramachandra, is enshrined by devout imagination in the faith, love and worship of the heart, as the one making the Supreme Spirit concrete and personal. Moved by love and longing, the heart reaches out to seek God Himself through the figure so enshrined. This movement and experience expresses what in Christian

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history the Apostle Paul proclaimed to people in Asia Minor who would have honoured him and his companion as gods come to earth in the likeness of men—that among all nations, "God hath not left Himself "without witness"; also in Grecian Athens, that God has so made men and planned their life that "they should seek God, if haply they might "feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of "us; for in Him we live and move and have our being." True *bhaktas* (loving, trustful devotees) in all ages and lands have felt after God by the moving of His Spirit within them; and surely they have found Him. Such faith may also believe that there is an answer from God Himself meeting man's thought and longing, not merely by man surrounding some ancient figure of history with divine glory long after the event, but rather by His own revealing in a figure that is not a mere illusive appearance of humanity, but a perfect human figure, as truly human as divine. The real gap or division between human and divine is not so much in essential being—"in "Him we live and move and have our being....for we are also His "offspring"—but in the moral perversity that man has allowed to blight his life, that is not illusion but very fact and conscious guilt, and from which an Incarnate Saviour will save in order to bring about that oneness of life and fellowship possible only to those akin in being and spirit. The Gospel, or Good News, which the Lord Jesus Christ commanded His followers to take to the whole world of men, tells of that answer and that salvation. That goes beyond my purpose in giving this translation. The aim here is to show the earnestness and sincerity of devotion as expressed by such as Tulsidas (with much else commonly accepted but not vitally relevant) which must surely be acceptable to God and have a response from Him.

Though the year of Tulsidas's birth is uncertain, the period of his life can be determined by two or three certain facts. It is known that he died in A.D. 1623 or 1624; the most commonly accepted year of his birth is either 1523 or 1527, though another estimate puts this at the beginning of the 16th century. He gives the year when he began writing his masterpiece; it was at Ayodhya in the equivalent of A.D. 1575. Thus he was contemporary with the great Muslim rulers Babar, Sher Shah, Humayun, Akbar and Jehangir; also with Henry VIII and Elizabeth, outstanding in the 16th century in England, and the period of Spenser and Shakespeare. An Indian writer says there were later writers of

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the same name (perhaps taking his name to add glory to their own work), who have been claimed as Goswami Tulsidas, author of *Rama-Charita-Manasa,* and the details of whose lives have been used to fill in gaps in Goswamiji's life (Goswami is a title given to our Tulsidas). Other well-established facts are: That he was a Brahman of Rajapur near Prayag in south-eastern Uttar Pradesh (former United Provinces), that his former name was Harbola, but that the name Tulsidas was given him by his *guru* with whom he lived as a youth at Ayodhya. From his teacher he learned much of the story of Rama; much also of *bhakti,* the faith and movement centring in Personal Incarnate Deity, spread over North India by Ramananda in the 14th century (Tulsidas's teacher was a descendant-*guru* of Ramananda's followers). Tulsidas himself did much to deepen and intensify this faith in the hearts of people of all classes, over against the negative abstract philosophy of the Impersonal taught by Sankara and others.

A great change, a veritable conversion, came into the life of Tulsidas through a remark made by his wife whom he loved passionately. She had gone to her parents' home; when her husband, unable to endure her absence, went to her, she rebuked him, taunting him with loving her body—a thing of mere flesh and bone—more than he loved Rama. The result was very different from what she had wished and expected. He left wife and home, wandered as an ascetic for a time, and later spent his years chiefly at sacred Banaras. He was about fifty years old when he began to write *Rama-Charita-Manasa,* and left probably more than one copy in his own handwriting (though it is questioned whether even a fragment of these originals remains today). He wrote a number of other works; his authorship of some attributed to him is denied by capable judges.

A few tributes by English and Indian writers will be of interest to readers here:

"Tulsidas was a very real and lovable man and in his works he "veritably still lives.... The *Ramayana* is the work by which the author "is immortalised. It is the Bible of the Hindi-speaking Hindus. The "Goswami's humble and devout spirit is united with an ability to use "Hindi in a way which no other writer has equalled. Tulsidas wrote "not to display his learning, or to tickle the ears of pedants; he wrote "for the people and has had his reward. No poet in England has ever

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"been to the masses what Tulsidas has been to the people of this land." (Edwin Greaves in *A Sketch of Hindi Literature.*)

"One most commendable feature of the *Ramayana* (of Tulsidas) is "its pure and lofty moral tone....It is this feature of his poem which "has given it so much value in holding up a high moral ideal before its "readers....Many passages show that Tulsidas was a true observer "and lover of nature....The *Ramayana* is undoubtedly a great poem, "worthy to rank among the classical masterpieces of the world's lite- "rature.... (Tulsidas) knew he would meet with his critics, especially "among the Sanskrit *pandits*, who would affect to despise his work as a "concession to the uneducated multitude....The wonderful acceptance, "however, which the poem of Tulsidas has received has been its "greatest vindication." (F. E. Keay in *Hindi Literature.*)

"The Hindi *Ramayana* is emphatically the book of the common "people. To those who would really know the heart of India with all "its longings and aspirations, this work will have far more significance "than the ancient Sanskrit classics which are unknown to all but the "most learned *pandits.*" (Author unknown; in a small work on *Divine Incarnation.*)

"The whole of Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is a passionate protest against "the virtual atheism of metaphysical Hindu philosophy....Tulsidas "insists that they derogate from divine perfection who divest it of "personality and reduce it to an abstraction....Professional Sanskrit "*pandits* still affect to despise his work as an unworthy concession to "the illiterate masses. With this small and solitary exception, the "book is in every man's hands from the court to the cottage, and is "read, or heard, and appreciated by every class of the Hindu commu- "nity, whether high or low, rich or poor, young or old.....The purity of "its moral sentiments and the absolute avoidance of the slightest "approach to any pruriency of idea....render it a singularly unexcep- "tionable text-book." (F. E. Growse, B.C.S., in the Introduction to his prose translation.)

"The best known and most famed book in Hindi literature. It is "known among all classes and no other religious book is so much "revered as this." (Dr. Shyam Sundar Das in the Introduction to the version put out by the Nagari Pracharini Sabha, Banaras.)

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"The world now so honours the simplicity, purity and devout worship "of Goswamiji that every place where he lived, or even where he "stayed, is honoured as a place of pilgrimage, and a temple or gather-"ing-place has been set up in his revered memory." (Pandit Vijayanand Tripathi, Banaras, in the Introduction to the version put out by the Bharati Bhandar, Allahabad.)

"The fame of Tulsidas as a writer rests wholly upon the *Rama-*"*Charita-Manasa*....the crown of the world's literature....The poetry "of this master-poet is unequalled in the Hindi language." (Shri Ganesh Bihari Misra in a long critical study of Tulsidas, with other Hindi writers, in *Hindi Navaratna*—the Nine Gems of Hindi Literature.)¶

Finally, Mahatma Gandhi has written in *The Story of My Experiments With Truth*: "What, however, left a deep impression on me was "the reading of *Ramayana* before my father. During part of his illness "my father was in Porbandar. There every evening he used to listen "to *Ramayana*. The reader was a great devotee of Rama—Ladha "Maharaj of Bileshvar....I must have been 13 at that time, but "I quite remember being enraptured by his reading. That laid the "foundation of my deep devotion to *Ramayana*. Today I regard the "*Ramayana* of Tulsidas as the greatest book in all devotional "literature."

Such appreciations will, I am sure, amply justify the attempt to give the *Ramayana* in this form to English readers. The Western reader will find in this work many odd ways of expression, often much extravagance in descriptive and imaginative writing. There is also much legendary and mythical material, symbolic and interesting. For instance, there is the figure of the monkey-hero and devotee Hanuman (whose simple picture appears on each page of this edition) who performs incredible and monkey-ish feats, but is greatly revered —virtually worshipped—by many in India, not so much for these feats as for the fact that he embodies humble adoration and devotion to the Lord Rama. He and Kakabhusundi (the crow who gladly accepts this form as enabling him to express with supreme humility the lesson he has been taught by hard experience, that devotion to the divine without partisan bitterness is the essence of true religion)—these two, with, on

¶ The last three comments are translated from Hindi works.

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the human level, the princes Bharat and Lakshman and the low-born boatman, and with the demon prince Vibhishan, are outstanding examples of what the whole poem is trying to express in vivid imagery.

On the other hand, there is literary beauty with moral and spiritual worth which a reader even in English may appreciate and find deeply moving—as I do. If readers find the first pages, a long introduction by Tulsidas, somewhat tiring at first, I suggest they turn to Book I, *chaupai* 44 onward (The Conversation of Bharadvaja and Yajnavalkya); but they should certainly come back to the early stanzas, and will be well repaid when they have the spirit and movement of the author with them. There is wit and imagination, a clever adapting of pictures to comparison and to moral teaching that is not mere cleverness, but great ability consecrated to a high task. Every now and then there is a couplet or sentence that is like a rapier thrust to the mind and conscience. Underneath the Eastern dress and atmosphere the reader will feel the spirit and nature that make all men akin.

As guidance for reading, note: The Invocations from Sanskrit are to be read with no syllabic stress; but the other forms—*chaupais, dohas, sorathas* and *chhands*—will, I am sure, give their own stress and rhythm as they are read. The *chhand* is infrequent; it is generally given when the story reaches some ecstatic and intense point. The *soratha* is generally used to quieten or slow down the narrative after an uplifting strain. The *chaupais* and *dohas,* one generally following the other, are the common poetic forms for narrative or expression of thought. I have considered it better not to add accent marks to vowels to indicate proper pronunciation; the following hints will help in pronouncing the names and the few words given in Hindi form: 'a' is either long as in *father,* or short as 'u' in *but*; 'a' is never pronounced as in *fat,* there is no such vowel sound in Hindi; 'i' is either short as in *it,* or long as 'ee' in *feet* (Sita is pronounced Seeta, but Siva has 'i' as in *it*); 'u' is short as in *put,* or long as in *rule*; 'e' is always as 'a' in *fate* (never as in *get*); 'ai' gives the sound of 'i' as in *kite*; 'o' as in *note* (never as in *got*); and 'au' as 'ow' in *how.* But these vowel sounds should not be exaggerated, as is the tendency of some English-speaking people. In most places rhythm and smooth reading will indicate whether a vowel is to be pronounced as long or short. All else will, I think, be straightforward.

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In brief, the story foundation of the poem is as follows: After some interesting preparatory stories from mythology, chiefly showing the need of a divine deliverer on earth, or for the gods, following on the birth of demon Ravan and the establishment of his demon kingdom, the story is given of the birth of Rama and his three brothers as sons of King Dasrath—Book I, *chaupai* 194. As a young man, in a bow-trial at the court of Janak, a neighbouring king, Rama wins Sita as his bride, his brothers also wedding princesses of that royal family. They return happily to Avadh. King Dasrath plans to leave the throne to Rama and to end his days in religious retirement; but misled by her maid, Queen Kaikeyi (one of Dasrath's three wives) demands fulfilment of two boons promised her long before, only now expressed—that the kingdom be given to Bharat, her son, and that Rama be banished to life in the forest for fourteen years. Sita accompanies Rama, as does also Lakshman his brother, this tragedy leading to the death of Dasrath. Bharat, devoted to Rama, takes the throne only as deputy for his brother. One day in the forest, while Rama is away and Lakshman is lured off by a false call, Sita is captured by the demon king Ravan; he takes her to his fortress in Lanka (Ceylon) and shuts her up there, trying to win her love. Rama is distraught (Tulsidas says it is but *Maya*). Eventually with the help of monkey allies, notably Hanuman, he finds out where she is. After a great battle between Rama with his monkey and bear allies on the one hand and Ravan with his demon army on the other, Ravan is killed and Sita is released. The two brothers and Sita return to Avadh at the end of the period, and the joyous prosperity of Rama's reign is established. There are interesting and vivid episodes and conversations added to all this, notably the conversation at the end between the crow Bhusundi and the eagle Garur, the former being in that form a supreme devotee of Rama and the other king of birds; in this the true meaning and value of devotion to the Supreme in the form of Rama is expounded.

The edition of *Rama-Charita-Manasa* followed for purposes of this rendering has been that of Chaturvedi Dwarikaprasad Sharma in close consultation with the editions of Dr. Mataprasad Gupta, the Gita Press and Dr. Shyam Sundar Das.

A word of thankful appreciation is due to Mr. Devadas Gandhi of The *Hindustan Times* (a son of the Mahatma), who has so readily

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and generously undertaken, at expensive risk, the publication of the work. My sincere thanks also to his deputy, Dr. S. N. Vyas, who has supervised the preparation especially of the Hindi-English edition, and whose counsel has helped to correct or improve in the English rendering some expressions and interpretations. Not that the work is now without blemish; in the true spirit of Tulsidas I must acknowledge that there are imperfections, and must ask beforehand, as did he, the patient forbearance of those who note such things. This is not intended as a word-for-word literal translation; indeed, such would not be a true translation, for it would often misrepresent in English what the author tried to say in the Indian language of his day. It is intended to interpret, while following the text as closely as possible; thus at times phrases may seem to differ from the original, but on the whole, I believe, it follows closely Tulsidas's own words and does not misrepresent even when it departs somewhat from them. The combined Hindi-English edition will have, I believe, real value for students, Indian and foreign, in all language areas of India. The English edition should be both interesting and enlightening to those in India already familiar with the Hindi, and to those abroad who will have no interest in or need of the Hindi, but wish to become acquainted with this literary and religious classic of India. I offer this as one fruit of almost forty years' life and service with the people of India, in town and village, as a tribute to many friends whom I love and great figures whom I revere; also in the hope that it will bring India and other peoples nearer to one another and help to a fuller spiritual life in deeper appreciation of earnest seeking, longing and finding as here portrayed.

Pauri, Garhwal (India)
June 1953

A. G. ATKINS

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BOOKS I and II

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XIX

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THE RAMA-CHARITA-MANASA

[LAKE OF RAMA'S DEEDS]

OF GOSWAMI TULSIDAS

BOOK I—CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

Sanskrit Invocation and Praise

1. Hail to Sarasvati and to Ganpati, the honoured authors
Of all letters and expression, moods and metres, and all blessings.

2. Hail to Parvati and Siva, faith and rev'rence incarnating,
Without whom not e'en the holiest e'er can see the Lord Indwelling.

3. Hail to thee, all wise and deathless Master, Siva incarnating,
By whose favour e'en the crescent moon is rev'renced in all places.

4. Hail thou lord of bards, Valmiki; Hanuman too, lord of monkeys,
Wand'ring with pure learning in the wood of Sita-Rama's graces.

5. Hail to Rama's own beloved Sita, victor o'er all suff'ring,
Mistress of birth, life and death, and of all happiness the giver.

6. Hail, Lord Vishnu, known by name of Rama, thou above all causes the Supreme;

In whose pow'r illusive lies the universe with Brahma and all heav'nly ones.

By whose being passing things appear eternal, as the snake in place of rope;

By whose feet as boat may all who will pass safely o'er the changeful sea of life.

7. Says Tulsi, as in many ancient chronicles,
And other scriptures is recorded Rama's fame,
And for my own delight in language choice and clear,
I write in song the full account of Raghunath.

SORATHA 1

O Thou, whom rememb'ring, success
Comes surely, Lord Ganesh, the elephant-headed,
In mercy, Lord, me do thou bless,
Thou home of all good, to whom wisdom is wedded.

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O Thou who mak'st dumb men to speak,
By whose power than mountains the lame can climb higher,
O Sharda, thy favour I seek
Who consumest the ills of this dark age as fire.

O Thou with the form lotus-blue,
And whose eyes like the new-budding lily are red,
Lord Vishnu, in my heart dwell thou,
Who dost rest on the calm milky sea as thy bed.

Like the jasmine and moon, white and clear,
O Thou, Uma's lord, home of all graciousness,
Thou to whom the poor ever are dear,
Siva, Passion's destroyer, poor me do thou bless.

My own master's feet I revere,
Sea of kindness, Lord Vishnu in man's form below,
By whose words, than the sun's rays more clear,
Error's night is dispersed, as night always must go.

CHAUPAI 1

INVOCATION AND SALUTATION

I honour the dust of my lord's lotus feet,
So brilliant and fragrant, refreshing and sweet;

The substance and root of the life that is deathless,
All evils allaying and rendr'ing them harmless;

Like ashes on Lord Siva's body divine,
'Tis the giver of joy ever glorious and fine;

'Tis the cleanser of filth from the mirror-like soul;
Once applied it brings virtues within our control.

Recalling the nails of his feet, jewel-bright,
All my heart is illumined with heavenly light.

Like sun-rays the darkness of error dispelling;
How blessed is he in whose heart is its dwelling.

When heavenly glory thus lightens the heart
All the night shades of evil and sorrow depart.

Then Rama's deeds shine like a jewel's clear ray,
To be found where the mine may conceal or display.

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DOHA 1

Whoever this salve shall apply to his eyes,
Shall be thereby enlightened and cheered,
And enabled to look on the pastimes of Rama
In woods and hills where he appeared.

CHAUPAI 2

The dust of his feet is a salve soft and pleasing,
For healing the eyes, giving sight and pain easing.

With mind's eye thus cleansed, all the deeds of Lord Rama
I'll tell as I know them, the world-saving drama.

I first of all honour the feet of the sages,
Dispellers of error-born doubt in all ages.

To th' mines of all virtue, nobility's throng,
Do I offer salute both with heart and with tongue.

Like the cotton tree's fruit are the saint's blessed deeds,
Tho' austere, pure and helpful in manifold needs,

Well cov'ring all faults, even those most severe;
I honour the saints, those whom all men revere.

The gath'ring of saints, giving joy all divine,
Is the meeting of waters at Prayag's fair shrine.

Devotion to Rama is Ganges full swelling;
Sar'svati is thought upon God and forth-telling;

Tradition and ritual, things bid and forbidden,
O'ercoming all evil, are Yam'na, Sun-maiden;

The tales of the gods are these three streams uniting,
The hearts of all hearers forever delighting;

The fig tree immortal is faith firm in duty;
The holy assembly the shrine in its beauty.

Soon reached is this shrine in all times and all places;
Who serves it with rev'rence, his ills it effaces.

O heavenly shrine, of pure glory untold,
All thy power is shown as thy blessings unfold.

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DOHA 2

The man who will hear and perceive, mind enthralled,
And will bathe with his whole heart and soul,
At this fair shrine of saints, in this happy concourse,
Shall find wealth, joy and heaven's true goal.

CHAUPAI 3

The fruit is immediate; you bathe and 'tis done!
The crow becomes song-bird, the stork becomes swan.

Let no one at this be o'erwhelmed with surprise,
For good company's glory is clear to all eyes.

The low-born Agastya, Narad and Valmik,
Each one tells of his rise from life's depths to its peak.

Ev'ry creature that moves in air, water, or earth,
All things senseless or sentient, whatever their birth,

Whoe'er attains wisdom, fame, honour, salvation,
Or virtue, in whatever manner or station,

Each knows 'tis by means of good comp'ny alone,
Nor by man, nor by scripture is other means known.

True wisdom is found in such fellowship only;
Good comp'ny is found by Lord Rama's grace only.

Of joy and true blessing good comp'ny's the root;
Its flow'r is perfection, good works are its fruit.

The rogue is reformed in good company's mould,
As by touch of the magic-stone lead becomes gold.

The good man, tho' brought near bad comp'ny, retains
All his good; tho' in snake's head, the gem gem remains.

If telling the beauty of sainthood engages
The full pow'r of deities, poets and sages,

Then how can my feeble pow'rs tell all its story?
Can greengrocers tell all a gem's worth and glory?

DOHA 3

The saintly I hail, those of equable mind,
Those the same both to foe and to friend,

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Just as flow'rs in the palms of the hands both to right
And to left do their sweet fragrance lend.

Ye saints single-hearted, ye true friends of all men,
O hear ye my childlike plea;
Be gracious, and knowing my heart, give devotion
For Rama's fair feet to me.

CHAUPAI 4

Once more, I salute the vile wretches who seek
Without reason to trouble the good and the meek;

To whom a man's ill is their good, good is ill,
Who rejoice in his losses, his blessings bewail.

They smother, eclipse-like, the deities' fame;
With a thousand hands work a man's ruin and shame.

By them faults are watched for with thousands of eyes,
But the good is befouled as fresh butter by flies.

Like Hell's lord their anger, their temper like flame;
As rich as wealth's king, but in evil and shame.

Like portentous comets, like things that men dread,
One is safe when they're, like Kumbhakaran¶, in bed!

Giving all if the harm of another 'twill yield,
Just as hail melts away in destroying a field.

All hail to such rogues, to men's faults adding spite,
Like a thousand-mouthed serpent with venomous bite.

These men, Prithuraj-like, with ten thousand ears,
Do I hail, altho' other than evil none hears.

These whom I implore are, like Indra, delighting
Forever in demons, carousing and fighting.

They're fond of harsh words like a thunderbolt crashing;
On hapless ones' failings a thousand eyes flashing.

¶ A demon who spent his time eating and sleeping—waking only to seek more to devour.

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DOHA 4

I know that their manner on hearing of stoics,
Who treat just the same foe and friend,
Is to burn with quick rage; and yet folding my hands,
As a suppliant to them I bend.

CHAUPAI 5

I've offered on my part my humble petition,
But can one expect them to change their condition?

You may feed a crow on the finest of fare,
But he'll still be a meat-eating crow I declare.

I bow at the feet both of saint and of sinner,
Both givers of pain, but in different manner;

The saint when he leaves us takes with him our life,
But to meet with a sinner brings suff'ring and strife.

Altho' diff'ring in life, of the same Mother Earth,
As both lotus and leech have in water their birth,

So from one world both good men and bad men are brought,
As both nectar and poison in one sea were sought.

By good deeds and bad deeds, they both attain fame,
But the one in high honour, the other in shame.

The good are like nectar, the moon, Ganges water;
The bad like fire, poison, the river of slaughter.

Both virtue and vice are by all men discerned,
But, as led by the mind, one is loved, one is spurned.

DOHA 5

The good man will cleave and aspire to the good,
But the vicious man only to vice;
For long life there is nectar and poison for death,
Both are sought for and sold at high price.

CHAUPAI 6

The wrongs of the rogue and the good of the good,
Are both infinite oceans; both deep, full and broad;

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Both their good and their ill therefore tell I, believing
None gathers or spurns if no diff'rence perceiving.

Divine power brought good and evil to birth;
The scriptures distinguish 'tween faults and true worth.

The chronicles, scriptures and legends all tell
How in God's world together both good and ill dwell.

Joy and pain, right and wrong, night and day, all things dual;
The high caste and low caste; men kindly, men cruel;

Both demons and gods; men both high born and low;
The life-giving nectar, death-dealing drugs too;

Things passing, th' eternal; the soul, Lord of all;
Both good fortune and ill; beggar, king; great and small;

Benares and Magadh¶; Ganges and Death's water;
Dry deserts, rich plains; priests and butchers who slaughter;

Realms heav'nly and hellish; hot passion, restraint;
Dark Magic and scripture; fair virtue, foul taint;

DOHA 6

The lifeless, the living; things fair and things foul,
All were made by the Creator's will;
The saint, like the swan, takes the milk of the good,
While rejecting the water of ill.†

CHAUPAI 7

When God to a man gives a mind so discerning,
He cleaves to the good, from the vile ever turning.

Yet good men, by time, fate, or temper o'erpowered,
In their goodness may fail, by illusion allured.

Then God, to reform them, their body assuming,
Gives cleanness and glory, all evil consuming.

Tho' when with good men good be done by the evil,
Their foul mind abides, still akin to the devil,

¶ Growse says, "Magadh (Bihar) is taken as the opposite to Benares in consequence of its being the birthplace of Buddha."

† In fables, the swan can separate milk from water.

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Impostors in fine clothes are hard to detect,
And they may for a time from the world gain respect;
But no good is achieved, in the end they're unveiled,
As Rahu, Ravan and Kalanemi all failed.¶

Altho' lowly in guise, the world honours the saint,
As the ape Hanuman and the bear Jamavant.

Bad comp'ny is loss, but good comp'ny is gain;
This as truth is well-known to both scripture and men.

With the wind as companion, dust heav'nward is borne,
But with water when mixed 'tis but mud which men scorn.

As taught by the house-folk, the parrot and jay
May Lord Rama's name utter, or swear hard all day.

In bad comp'ny smoke becomes nothing but soot,
But in ink to the writing of stories 'tis put.

That same smoke if with air, fire and water allied,
In the clouds is to life-giving service applied.

DOHA 7

The planets, all med'cines, air, water and clothing,
In ill or auspicious conjunction,
Are counted as things either evil or helpful;
All men know and heed this distinction.

The two lunar periods diff'ring in name,
Are both equal in darkness and light;
But as may be waxing or waning the moon,
They are named with great honour or slight.

Well knowing that on all things, lifeless or living,
My Lord Rama's power doth fall,
Forever with hands humbly folded I bow
At the lotus-like feet of them all.

¶ Kalanemi as an ascetic imposed on Hanuman, Ravan on Sita and Rahu as a god on Vishnu, says Growse.

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All monsters and deities, men, serpents, birds,
Forefathers, and seraphs, and ghosts,
All heavenly choristers, all night's dark demons,
Be gracious to me all ye hosts.

CHAUPAI 8

From four diff'rent modes countless types have their birth,
All the souls that inhabit air, water and earth.

In everything Sita and Rama beholding,
I offer obeisance, my hands humbly folding.

Give me as your servant a kindly reception,
And grant me your favour, forsaking deception.

Upon my own wisdom and strength ne'er relying,
To you do I come, for your aid meekly crying.

The Lord Raghupati's fame would I explore;
Fathomless are his ways and my mind is but poor.

Seeing no other course, such my hapless condition;
A beggar my mind is, but king my ambition.

Base minded, my longings yet heavenward winding;
Tho' thirsting for nectar, not e'en skimmed milk finding.

All good folks will pardon my brazen offending,
My childish words heeding and all their mind lending.

As to their child's stutterings more than another
Will listen delighted his father and mother.

Harsh people will mock, those perverse, evil-minded,
And those choosing vices for jewels, so blinded.

Every one thinks his own poetry splendid,
Whether 'tis dull, or with interest blended;

Rare in this world the good man who rejoices
In hearing from others good words and sweet voices.

Many are like to the rivers upwelling,
With every rainfall their own volume swelling;

But few are the noble ones, like to the ocean
That swells up on seeing the full-orbed moon's motion.

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DOHA 8

Tho' poor be my fortune and great be my longing,
Yet of this one thing I am sure,
That fair-minded people will hear and find joy,
Altho' base men may mock all the more.

CHAUPAI 9

Tho' bad men may laugh, good to me it is bringing;
Harsh to the crow is the sweetest bird's singing.

At swans geese will mock, frogs the rain-birds are teasing,
And so mocks the vile man at things pure and pleasing.

The poets who love not the Lord's feet sincerely
Will find in my verses the comical merely.

The language is homely, my mind fit to chaff at,
But harm there is none, tho' 'tis all fit to laugh at.

The man who of Rama's love knows not the glory
Will find it all tasteless on hearing the story;

But those not just talkers, with heart at God's feet,
To such true devotees his whole story is sweet.

Fair jewels of love for the Lord here observing,
All good men its music will praise as deserving.

Unlearned in letters indeed, I'm no poet,
All unskilled in art and in science, I know it.

Diverse are the figures and word connotations,
The metrical forms, rhythmical variations,

The secrets of sentiment, passion and mood,
And many the marks of bad poems and good.

But little of poetry know I, in truth,
And thus do I write on blank paper forsooth.

DOHA 9

Void of all charms tho' my language itself be,
One charm to the world known is here;
All men of good mind and of clearest discernment
Will think upon that and give ear.

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CHAUPAI 10

Yes, here is the name of Lord Rama, the gracious,
The essence of scripture, most pure, efficacious;

The place of all blessings, distresses destroying,
Used oft by both Siva and Uma in praying.

Altho' in fine language, the work of skilled poet
Of beauty has naught unless His name bestow it.

A woman, tho' moon-like, with jewels adorned,
If she's seen without clothes is unpleasing and scorned.

Tho' lacking in charm, tho' as poem none worse is,
Yet if Rama's name studs the poor poet's verses,

Then wise men will listen and honour ascribe it,
And saints like the bee for its sweetness imbibe it.

Tho' void of all artistic grace be the story,
Yet will it show forth Rama's prowess and glory.

So with this assurance my heart is inspired,
As when in good comp'ny ambition is fired.

Smoke's pungency is not unchangeably fixed,
It surrenders it if with sweet scent it is mixed.

So—uncouth be the language, the theme is sublime,
'Tis the story of Rama, bliss giv'n for all time.

CHHAND 1

Sublime bliss bestowing, all evil o'erthrowing,
Says Tulsi, tho' tortuous its going,
The Lord Rama's story is pure in its glory,
Like some sacred river on-flowing.
With his story blended, poor words are made splendid,
The hearts of all good men delighting;
As the ash of the dead, when on Siva's limbs spread,
Is made bright—with his glory uniting.

DOHA 10

Thus my simple writing to all will be pleasing
If with Rama's glory 'tis blent;

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The wood of all trees from the sandal-wood forest
Is highly esteemed for its scent;

The cow may be black, but its milk will be white,
Yes—and wholesome to all who may share;
So the songs of the glory of Sita and Rama,
In crude words, good men like to hear.

CHAUPAI 11

While hid with the elephant, mountain, or snake,
Rubies, pearls and bright diamonds no glory can take;

But on fair maiden's body, or king's noble crown,
They will find their full lustre, great worth and renown.

A poet's skill may give his poetry birth,
But all wise men will say, Elsewise comes its true worth.

In answer to pray'r, from her heavenly station,
The goddess of speech quickly brings inspiration.

But vain our devices and all our endeavours
Till bathed in the lake of the Lord Rama's favours.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

The poet and sage, in their heart this discerning,
All sing the Lord's praise, ill of dark days o'erturning.

When hearing one singing the common man's praises,
The goddess, with wailing, her protest upraises.

The mind, like a shell on the soul's ocean floor,
Say all wise men, awaits inspiration's first show'r;

And when falls a show'r of high thought some fine morn,
Then by each drop a pearl of word-music is born.

DOHA 11

Then skilfully piercing and stringing these pearls
On the thread of the Lord Rama's ways,
The godly man makes them a rosary bright,
To be worn on his heart all his days.

CHAUPAI 12

The men brought to birth in this age vile and low
Maybe look like the swan, but behave like the crow,

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Forsaking the scriptures for ways of the devil,
They're falsehood incarnate and vessels of evil;

They're liars, professing for Rama devotion,
Slaves are they to gold, wrath and vilest emotion.

Of such false men count me the first in the row;
Here I wave my faith's flag just to make a fine show;

But were I to start all my failings recounting,
'Twere endless, forever the list would be mounting.

I tell you, therefore, but a very small part;
From a little a wise man can well judge the heart.

If thinking of all these my prayers with my verses,
Then no one who hears me will answer with curses.

But after all this, if by doubt a man's harried,
Much more then than mine is his mind dull and arid.

A poet I am not, nor am I called clever,
But as my mind leads I sing Rama's praise ever.

Unbounded the Lord Raghupati's ways truly;
And narrow my mind caught in world's ways unduly.

Say! What weighs the wisp of dry tree-cotton drifting,
When caught by the forceful wind mountains uplifting?

So, thinking upon Rama's greatness unbounded,
In telling his story my mind is confounded.

DOHA 12

E'en Shar'da and Shesh-nag, e'en Siva and Brahma,
The sacred books, old ones and new,
All saying "Not thus and not thus is his nature,"
Sing ceaseless to him praises due.

CHAUPAI 13

All know that his greatness is far beyond telling,
And yet from all lips is his praise ever swelling.

'Tis this that the scriptures have giv'n as the reason
For worship in varying manner and season.

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One is he, Alone, without passion, form, name;
Without birth he; pure truth, thought and bliss; All-Supreme;

The worshipful One he, pervading creation,
Incarnate One too, sharing man's ways and station;

The good does he seek of the faithful and holy,
All loving and kind to the humble and lowly;

The souls who in love's bond are bound to him ever,
Upon them falls only his grace, his wrath never.

Lost things he restores, to the poor gives protection,
The Lord Raghuraja, all pow'r and perfection.

In this faith the wise praise the Lord and rejoice,
By this means making holy and fruitful their voice.

On this hope relying, I also adore him,
My head at his feet, bowing humbly before him.

My brother, to sing with the sages his praise
Is a way I will walk in with ease all my days.

DOHA 13

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

No matter how broad be the stream, if the ruler
Has had a strong bridge thrown across,
Then even the most insignificant insect
Can over it easily pass.

CHAUPAI 14

By this way and means my own heart re-assuring
I tell Raghupati's tale always alluring.

The great bards of old, such as Vyasa the story
With reverence tell of the Lord's divine glory.

Low bowed at their feet I request of them, "Sires,"
"Pray give me your aid to fulfil my desires."

The bards of this evil age likewise I honour,
The virtuous men who uplift Rama's banner,

The bards of the common folk, well-versed in song,
All who sing the Lord's praise in their own common tongue.

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The poets who have been, who are and who shall be,
By me, without guile, all such honoured may well be.

"Pray grant that by your gracious blessing these songs
"May be well accepted in saintly men's throngs;

"If wise men will not with their favour endow it,
"Then vain the endeavour and foolish the poet;

"Good only are such fame, such words and such power,
"Which Ganges-like all men with goodness endower;

"Lord Rama's high fame and my poor speech comparing,
"There comes hesitation and doubt at my daring;

"But if blest by you 'twill be pleasing enough,
"Just as when silk-embroidered is cloth coarse and rough;

"I pray you then grant from the heart your good favour,
"That fit for such theme be my voice and endeavour."

DOHA 14

"A style clear and simple, theme lofty and fine,
"High honour from good men begets;
"When list'ning to such, one by nature a foe,
"All his enmity quickly forgets.

"Such style and such theme demand mind clear and strong,
"But in mind weak and feeble am I;
"Again your assistance I therefore implore,
"As to tell the Lord's glory I try.

"The bards great and gifted are like to swans sporting
"In th' deep lake of Lord Rama's deeds;
"Childlike is my pray'r, but believe it well-meaning,
"And grant me aid meeting my needs."

SORATHA 2

I rev'rence the lotus-like feet
Of the sage who first told Rama's story to men;
It is full of things harsh and things sweet,
It is faultless, altho' 'tis with many faults blent.

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I rev'rence the four books divine
That carry us boat-like across this life's sea,
Where not even in dreams men repine,
Or know aught of grief while they tell Rama's fame.

The dust of God's feet I adore,
Of life and of all things the only Creator,
Of saint, nectar, moon, cow's rich store,
Of evil men too, drunkard's liquor and poison.

DOHA 15

With hands clasped I rev'rence immortals and Brahmans,
The wise and those teaching life's ways;
O grant me your favour and help me fulfil
My fair purpose to sing Rama's praise.

CHAUPAI 15

All hail, sister rivers, all clearness and beauty,
Thou sacred Ganges and thou hid Sarasvati;

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

Those waters, once drunk or once bathed in, sin quelling;
Names, once heard, once spoken, all error dispelling.

All hail, Siva, Parvati, parents and teachers,
To all giving good, guarding all lowly creatures,

Friends, servants and masters of fair Sita's lord,
Those by whom Tulsi's good is in all ways assured;

Those who for man's good in this age of alarms
Gave the knowledge to man of all strong spells and charms,

As sounds incoherent, crude, meaningless letters;
Yet Siva's strength blessing us, breaking our fetters.

On me then may great Siva's mercy alight;
It will make of my story a joy and delight.

That lord and his spouse for their favour recalling,
The story of Rama will be most enthralling;

By Siva's great grace my poor song will be brightened,
As dark night by moon and by stars is enlightened.

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All they who this story receive and impart,
With true understanding and love in their heart,
All faithful to Rama in truth and simplicity,
Free from all sin, shall enjoy true felicity.

DOHA 16

Dreaming or waking, if on me the favour
Of these heav'nly beings should rest,
Then all that I say will prove true, and my language
And writing will be greatly blest.

CHAUPAI 16

I honour Ayodhya, all holy within;
And the fair Sarju River, destroyer of sin.
All honour again to that town's sons and daughters,
Whom Lord Rama loved with love deep as deep waters.
For their sake he Sita's defamer forgave,
That a realm free from sorrow they always might have.
I honour Kausalya, like eastern sky bright,
Whose fair fame has spread, to the world giving light.
From whence Rama fair as the moon has arisen,
By whom the world's blest, evil's blooms are all frozen.
To Dasrath the king and his consorts, all hail!
Good deeds incarnating, to all bringing weal.
"I honour you humbly, with hand, voice and mind;
"Pray, as your son's servant, your grace may I find;
"Creating whom, God His own glory advanced;
"Rama's parents, by whom is man's glory enhanced."

SORATHA 3

I honour Ayodhya's great king,
To Rama's feet bound in completest devotion,
To whom Rama's loss death did bring,
Who snapped like a straw and in grief his life yielded.

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CHAUPAI 17

I honour Videha's great king and his suite,
All deeply devoted to Lord Rama's feet,

In royal state oft their emotion concealing,
But at the first sight love for Rama revealing.

I humbly hail Bharat also, brother royal,
He in ev'ry circumstance faithful and loyal;

Whose soul always hovered at Rama's dear feet,
Like thirsty bees hovering close to things sweet,

And Lachhman I honour, with feet like the lotus,
Those feet fair and fragrant which blessing have brought us;

The one whose renown is a strong staff upholding
Lord Rama's fair fame like a banner unfolding;

"O thou who to conquer the things by men dreaded,
"Did'st come in the form of the snake thousand-headed,

"O son of Sumitra, give gracious protection,

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

"Thou ocean of kindness and mine of perfection."
Lowly at Shatrughna's feet I bow reverent,
Foll'wer of Bharat and hero benevolent.

Hail Hanuman, chief in heroic fitness,
To whose prowess Rama himself gave his witness.

SORATHA 4

All hail to thee, Son of the Wind,
A fire to the forest of sin, store of knowledge;
Within the fair shrine of whose mind
Dwells Rama with arrow and bow in his hand.

CHAUPAI 18

King of apes, king of bears, king of demons and ghosts,
Angad also and with him the wild monkey hosts;

Them all I salute, at their feet humbly bent,
For Rama they found, tho' in base body pent.

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All Rama's true worshippers, however many,
Birds, beasts and immortals; men, demons and any,

The lotus-like feet of them all I acclaim,
As Rama's disciples with no selfish aim,

I hail Sukadev, Narad, Sanatkumar;
All wise men and learned, renowned near and far;

"Ye lordly ones, hail! At your feet see me bowing,
"And own me your servant, your kindness bestowing."

Fair Janki,¶ the daughter of Janak, world-mother,
Belov'd by the storehouse of grace as no other,

I worship her feet like the lotus in beauty,
Whose mercy will make my mind pure for its duty.

And once more I worship in thought, word and deed
At the feet of Lord Rama, feet worthy indeed;

Whose lotus eyes, arrow-like, with but one glance,
Give joy to men, scattering ev'ry mischance.

DOHA 17

As water and wave, as a word and its meaning,
Are one tho' divided when spoken,
So Sita and Rama as one do I worship,
Who love the man suff'ring and broken

CHAUPAI 19

The name Rama, Raghubar's name, I acclaim,
The light-giving source of sun, moon and all flame,

The breath of the scriptures, divinity's spirit,
Unmarked and unequalled, the mine of all merit;

As uttered by Siva, this charm best by far is,
For salvation needed; yes, e'en at Benares!

Ganesh knows its power and on this relying,
He gained the first honour when with the gods vying.†

¶ Another name for Sita.

† In a race with the gods round the world, Ganesh wrote this name in the dust and rode round it and was proclaimed the winner.

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The poet Valmiki by pow'r of this name,
Tho' he uttered it backwards, all holy became.

"This name uttered once equals Vishnu's a thousand,"
This learning, Lord Siva's wife soon joined her husband.¶

Well-pleased Siva took the male-female form dual,
And named among women Parvati the jewel.

Lord Siva himself of its virtue has learned,
By this name for him poison to nectar was turned.

DOHA 18

Says Tulsi, a pure love for Rama is like to
The rain-season for the rice field;
The letters of this name are Savan and Bhadav,
The months when we hope for good yield.

CHAUPAI 20

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

Delightful and blessed, these syllables two
Are like eyes to the soul of man, clearing his view;

They are easily memorised, joy thus is given,
This world's good we gain and assured is our heaven.

Heard, spoken, remembered, they bring us good cheer;
Like Rama and Lakshman, both one and both dear.

When severed by love they're for utterance fitted,
Yet as the Supreme Soul and man's in one knitted.

Like Nara-Narayan, the twin divine brothers,
They're this world's preservers and saviours of others.

Like gems in a fair maiden's ears, faith adorning;
Bliss bringing like moon at night, like sun at morning.

Like nectar in taste and contentment imparting;
Tortoise-like and serpent-like this earth supporting;

To pure souls like bees to the lotus; and dear
As both Balram and Krishna to Jasoda were.

¶ Siva had finished his food, but his wife delayed as she was worshipping Vishnu; Siva told her Rama's name once was sufficient.

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DOHA 19

Says Tulsi, among other letters and signs,
These two from our Lord Rama's name
Shine out, as the canopy jewelled and crown
Reflect a revered monarch's fame.

CHAUPAI 21

The name and the named in close oneness are found,
As both master and foll'wer in true love are bound.

In name and in form the Lord's shadows are thrown;
(Tho' beyond word and time, to the simple He's known);

'Tis wrong to call either one small and one great;
But the wise understand when distinctions I state.

See now that the form must depend on the name,
For without it no knowledge of form can one claim.

Just what a thing is, tho' the form's in one's hand,
Without knowing the name one cannot understand;

But tho' out of sight be the form, if the name
Is recalled then the heart is with feeling aflame.

This name and form myst'ry, beyond tongue and pen,
Is an untold delight when 'tis once grasped by men.

Infinite and finite are both forms divine,
As witness and light does the name on them shine.

DOHA 20

Just place Rama's name at the door of your lips
As a lamp all be-jewelled and bright,
And then you will have—this is Tulsi's sure word—
Both within and without his pure light.

CHAUPAI 22

Repeating this name, into life wakes the saint,
Now released from all passion and error and taint;

He shares the ineffable bliss of the Lord,
Him beyond name and form, beyond blame, beyond word.

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He who would to deep secret knowledge attain,
Should repeat oft this name, thus his goal he will gain.

A mystic this name utt'ring, mind set and still,
Magic powers acquires, comes and goes as he will.

Repeating this name when in suff'ring and grief,
Will all sorrows disperse, bringing joy and relief,

Four types all devoted to Rama we find,
And alike all are virtuous, sinless and kind;

To the Lord he's most dear of these devotees four
Who will trust in his name as the world's truest lore.

Four scriptures, four ages—this name supreme reigns;
But in this Dark Age chiefly, this one hope remains.

DOHA 21

The man who has conquered all passion and lives
In his true love for Rama immersed,
His mind, as a fish, in the stream of this name's
Purest heavenly nectar is nursed.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

CHAUPAI 23

Infinite, finite, God in two forms is here,¶
Beyond word, beyond thought; without birth, without peer.

Far greater than these is the name, I dare say,
For both forms does the name gather under its sway.

The wise man and good knows the common mind well;
Here it is my own love and firm faith that I tell.

Like two fires, one hid and one seen in the fuel,
These forms are both found in divine nature dual;

Beyond grasp are both, yet both grasped by the name;
Thus greater the name than both forms I proclaim.

The One Lord Supreme, deathless, all things indwelling,
Full knowledge, full truth and full bliss e'er upwelling;

¶ Brahm (infinite); Rama (finite or incarnate).

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Tho' this Lord unchanging inhabits each breast,
Yet each soul in this world is distraught and distrest,

Till seeking we find by its name the true good;
As the worth by the gem and its name's understood.

DOHA 22

The name—It is greater than e'en the Supreme,
And infinite thus I have shown;
Now, greater the name is than Rama the man,
This thought of mine too I must own.

CHAUPAI 24

Lord Rama for sake of his own shared man's lot,
And the faithful to bliss by his suff'ring has brought.

This dear name repeating with loyal devotion,
His followers dwell by felicity's ocean.

Himself he saved one; 'twas the saint's erring wife,¶
But his name countless sinners has brought to new life.

For sake of the Brahman revered did he slaughter,
With army and son, Suketu's demon daughter;

His name for his servants has put to full flight
All their suff'ring and shame, as the sun routs the night.

Himself Rama broke the Lord Siva's great bow,
But his name breaks life's bondage and fear and vain show.

One forest, Dandaka, the Lord beautified,
But innum'rable hearts has his name sanctified.

Himself Rama wiped out the dark demon host,
But his name kills all evils this Dark Age can boast.

DOHA 23

To faithful ones, such as Jatayu the vulture,
Gave Rama in grace life immortal;
His name, by the scriptures extolled, has to countless
Vile sinners thrown open life's portal.

¶ See later in the story.

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CHAUPAI 25

The tale of Sukanth and Vibhishan has shown
How Rama protected them—this is well-known;

His name's pow'r has many poor suppliants blest,
Both the world and the scriptures its glory attest.

By Rama a bridge o'er the ocean was laid;
'Twas a hard task, tho' monkeys and bears gave him aid;

Life's sea, his name utt'ring, dry land shall we find;
All ye wise men and good, ponder this in your mind.

Ravan and all his host Rama beat and destroyed,
And with Sita returned to his home over-joyed;

As king in the king's city, Avadh,¶ he reigned
While the gods and the saints sang his praises unfeigned;

But now in love pond'ring his name, devotees
Overcome the strong army of error with ease.

By the pow'r of this name and with true love enthralled,
They all live in true bliss, by no ill dream appalled.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

DOHA 26

Far greater than Brahma and Rama this name,
Both the man and god giving true glory,
As Siva knew well; this as essence he chose
From the billions of lines in this story.†

CHAUPAI 26

Lord Siva of dread attire, mine of true blessing,
Immortal became, this name's virtue confessing.

Like Suka and Sanak, great saints and great sages
Know by this name's pow'r the divine bliss of ages.

Narad knew its power, himself the dear lover
Of Siva and Vishnu, both loved the world over.

¶ Ayodhya.

† He distributed the lines through the universe, but kept these two final letters or syllables for himself.

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'Twas by the Lord's grace, with this name as his theme,
Prahalad 'mong the saintly became the supreme.¶

In deep distress Dhruva the Lord's name repeated,
And now as reward in high heaven is seated.

This name always keeping in close recollection,
The ape, Hanuman, has held Rama's affection.

The vicious Ajamil, the elephant, the whore,
All attained by this name to salvation's fair shore.†

But how can I tell of this name the full story?
Why! Rama himself could not tell all its glory!

DOHA 25

The Paradise-tree is this dear name of Rama,
In this Dark Age home of all bliss;
Says Tulsi, tho' vile as the hemp, man is changed
To the sweetness of *tulsi*‡ by this.

CHAUPAI 27

Four ages, three eras, three worlds; in them all
If one utters this name no distress can appal.

The scriptures and saints all declare with one mind
That in Rama's love fruit of all virtue we find.

In th' first age pray'r thoughtful; in th' next sacrifice,
In th' third ritual worship of God will suffice;

But in this Evil Age naught but evil is rife;
All men move in this foul sea like fish throughout life.

In such times this name is our one hope forever,
Its pow'r from all bondage and ill can deliver.
By this name in such days all good aims are given,
'Tis father and mother both here and in heaven.

¶ Prahalad was the pious son of a demonish father.
† All ancient legends, the name used being Narayan or Vishnu whom Rama incarnates.
‡ Basil.

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Nor deeds, nor devotion, nor wisdom avail;
Rama's name is our one hope and never can fail.

Like vile Kalanemi's this age of deceit;
This name Hanuman-like its wiles will defeat.¶

DOHA 26

As th' man-lion came to kill Kanak-Kashipu
And save Prahalad the devout;
So th' dear name of Rama protects all the faithful
By putting all evils to rout.

CHAUPAI 28

The name that repeated, in ill mind or sound,
Both in action and rest scatters joy all around,

Recalling that name, bowing low at his feet,
All the praises of Rama I'll gladly repeat.

By him whose great kindness is never deflected
May ev'ry defect in my song be corrected.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

O Rama, good master, thy poor servant I;
Guard me for thine own sake, lord, as to thee I fly.

The good master, all men and scriptures declare,
Is he who heeds love and gives answer to prayer.

Men rich and men poor, men of village and town,
The wise and the fool, base men, men of renown,

Bards good and bards ill, as their mind may impel,
All men and all women their king's praises tell:

"He is holy and worthy in ways and in mind;
"He's a god incarnated, most wondrously kind;

"He honours all, hears all, and courteous replies;
"He their love, thought and ways can at once recognise."

While this is the nature of kings great and small,
'Tis much more so of Kosala's lord, best of all.

¶ See later, Book VI.

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Lord Rama is pleased with love warm and unfeigned;
Yes, even in such as I foolish and stained.

DOHA 27

The merciful Rama will cherish the longing
And love of this servant most mean;
'Twas he made the rock float, and made bears and monkeys
His counsellors trusted and keen.

Tho' I be a by-word and all men may tell it,
This joke upon Rama must pass,
That he, Sita's noble lord, has as his servant
The poor simple Tulsi Das!

CHAUPAI 29

Yes, great my conceited presumption and daring;
E'en hell shows surprise and disgust, of it hearing.

I know it myself, at the thought of it quaking;
No notice does Rama dream ever of taking.

He pondered it well when he heard of my notion,
And he, my dear master, approved my devotion.

Indeed, tho' the story be spoilt in the telling,
He's pleased with the love from sincere hearts upwelling.

The lord does not take to heart just the offence,
But he tests the heart ev'ry time and its intents.

For instance, the wrong for which Bali was slain
Was the same that the thoughtless Sukanth did again;

Vibhishan the same folly also committed,
But Rama nor blame nor chastising permitted.

Them both he commended to Bharat as loyal,
With praise told about them before the court royal.

DOHA 28

Dear as himself, as he sat 'neath the trees,
Were the monkeys that played up above;
So I, Tulsi, say there is none like to Rama
The fount of all goodness and love.

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"O Rama, my lord, by thy goodness unbounded
"Alike upon all good is poured;
"If always and ev'rywhere this thing is proven,
"Then good is to Tulsi assured."

In this way my virtues and faults plainly telling,
To all I bow low and begin
To tell of the wonderful glory of Rama,
Which heard will destroy ev'ry sin.

CHAUPAI 30

The story which by Yajnavalkya was told
To the sage Bharadvaja in fair days of old,

That story delightful I too will relate;
All the fair-minded folks it will surely elate.

The tale was composed by Lord Siva at first,
And was then to fair Uma in kindness rehearsed.

Again it was told to Bhusundi the crow,
He of all Rama's devotees greatest, we know.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

From him Yajnavalkya with joy heard and hailed it,
Who to Bharadvaja in his turn retailed it.

These hearers and tellers, the same spirit showing,
Were all of one mind, the Lord's sportive ways knowing.

They by their own powers the lore understand
Of all times, as tho' 'tis but a plum in the hand.

Many devotees since, all pure, humble mind,
Tell and hear, and in many forms true light they find.

DOHA 29

I from my own master at Sukarakhet
First heard of this story sublime;
But little did I understand, for a child
And unlettered was I at the time.

If hearer and teller are both learned persons,
Then may Rama's secret be grasped;
But how by a dullard like me in the mire
Of this dark evil age tightly clasped?

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CHAUPAI 31

Time after time did my master bestow it,
Thus little by little I too came to know it;

And now in the common tongue I will transcribe it,
That I too the better may grasp and imbibe it.

As is the pow'r of my wisdom and learning
I speak, for all help to the Lord's guidance turning.

All doubts and all errors this story can harry;
This boat ev'ry soul across life's sea can carry.

This story of Rama gives peace to the wise
And delight to all men; where it comes evil flies.

'Tis a death-dealing bird to the snake of desire;
'Tis the wood laid and kindled to light wisdom's fire;

'Tis in this Dark Age cow divine all-sustaining;
To saints the elixir 'gainst ills, life maintaining.

'Tis earth's nectar stream; life and death chains it shatters;
Like snakes swall'wing toads ev'ry error it scatters.

Like Parvati saints and gods saving from ill
By destroying all demons, this too destroys hell.

Like Lakshmi sea-born, where saints meet this unfolds;
And like earth firm, unmoved, it all burdens upholds.

Like the Yamuna river, death's angel it shames;
And like Kashi ¶ for life ev'ry soul it reclaims.

To Rama 'tis dear as the sacred plant *tulsi;*
To Tulsi 'tis good as his own mother Hulsi.

Like Siva's dear Narmada† born of the mountain,
'Tis giver of joys and of all good the fountain.

Like Aditi, mother of all those divine,
'Tis the sphere wherein all Rama's grace and love shine.

¶ Benares.

† A river and a goddess.

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DOHA 30

Like the river Mandakini is Rama's story;
Like Mount Chitrakut pure intent;
True love's like the forest delightful, says Tulsi,
Where Rama and Sita years spent.

CHAUPAI 32

Like the famed magic stone are the Lord Rama's ways,
And a gem for pure minds such as fair maid displays.

The host of his virtues delights the whole earth,
Giving goodness, salvation, true wealth, heav'nly birth.

Of knowledge, of temp'rance, oneness the teacher;
Physician divine 'gainst all dread ills of nature.

Of Sita and Rama's love mother and father;
The seed from which men holy vows and deeds gather.

O'er all sin and suff'ring and sorrow the victor;
In this and the next world our gracious protector.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

As counsellor royal 'tis thought's trusty guide;
By it like Agastya ¶ greed's vast sea is dried.

It routs, like a lion 'gainst elephants wild,
Lust, anger, uncleanness in man's mind defiled.

To Siva 'tis like a guest honoured and dear;
And all meanness it quenches as rain quenches fire.

'Gainst the venom of "things" 'tis the mightiest spell,
And is potent the dread lines of fate to dispel.

Like the sun it o'ercomes night of error and vice;
By it saints are refreshed, as by rain fields of rice.

'Tis the Paradise-tree granting wishes deserved;
Like the heav'nly ones generous, soon found when served.

'Tis like stars in the sky of the true poet's mind;
Here the riches of life Rama's faithful ones find.

¶ Agastya drank the sea dry in three gulps when it disturbed his worship.

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Like the fruit of good deeds by the godly enjoyed,
And like good men the source of true good unalloyed.

In the devotee's soul 'tis like swans in the lake;
Like the rosary-waves that in fair Ganges break.

DOHA 31

The evil ways, evil thoughts and evil deeds,
The deceit, pride, untruth of this age,
Are as fuel to burn, and the graces of Rama
Will burn them as fiercest flame's rage.

The fair deeds of Rama are like to the moon,
Whose bright beams give to all men delight;
But as to the lotus and partridge those rays,
So his deeds to the pure are most bright.

CHAUPAI 33

I take divine Bhavani's numerous questions,
And Lord Siva's answers to her, as suggestions;

And thus I now give Rama's story in song
In the forms and styles varied that to it belong.

He who has not heard it before in this guise,
I trust will not be overwhelmed with surprise.

When hearing these wonderful things, men of learning
Will not be astonished, well-known truths discerning.

The stories of Rama on earth are unbounded;
They know this who stand in this faith firmly grounded.

In numberless forms has he been incarnated;
In numberless forms is his story related.

His ways charm the powers of imagination;
The sages have sung them in varied narration.

So let no dark doubts have their place in your heart;
But listen with rev'rant delight on your part.

DOHA 32

Infinite the virtues of infinite Rama;
His stories are also unbounded;

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But men who give ear with a pure understanding
Will not be amazed or confounded.

CHAUPAI 34

With all doubt thus from my heart taken I bow,
At the lotus-like feet of my master laid low.
Again with hands folded I make this my prayer,
May no fault in the telling mar this story fair.
My humble obeisance to Siva I bring,
As of Rama's fair glory and virtue I sing.
In the year sixteen hundred and thirty one bright,
With my head lowly placed at my lord's feet I write;
On Tuesday, the ninth day of Chaitra, month pleasing,
In th' city of Avadh my story releasing.
'Tis the birthday of Rama, as scriptures declare,
And the day when the pilgrims are gathering there.
All demons, birds, serpents, men, saints and gods too
There are meeting to bring to their lord homage true;
On this festival day of the lord Rama's birth
They all sing with acclaim his high praises and worth.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

DOHA 33

There hosts of devout ones are gathered to bathe
In the Sarju's pure full-flowing stream,¶
Their thoughts upon Rama's fair body dark-hued,
And continu'lly utt'ring his name.

CHAUPAI 35

If seen, touched, or bathed in, or drunk from, this river,
The scriptures all say, overcomes sin forever.
So holy this stream and so boundless its glory,
E'en Sharda's pure mind cannot tell all its story.

¶ A river in Ayodhya or Avadh.

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This fair city opens to all Rama's heaven,
The whole world knows well here is holiness given.

Beyond number souls from the four wombs are born;
But the souls who in Avadh die never return.

Well knowing this city the home of delight,
The giver of wealth, source of all that is bright,

Its history pure I'll begin to relate;
Once heard it destroys passion, envy and hate.

I name this The Lake of The Lord Rama's Deeds,
The Name that once heard gives the soul rest it needs.

The mind in the senses' fierce jungle fire burns,
But it finds quick relief when to this lake it turns.

This pure Lake of Lord Rama's deeds was first made
By Lord Siva; and sages it charmed when displayed.

The three ills of wilful wrong, woe and want dire,
And all sins of this age are consumed in this fire.

When first composed Siva did in his mind hold it,
And then in good time to his fair goddess told it.

It pleased him to give as the name of this drama,
The Beautiful Lake of the Deeds of Lord Rama.

On telling this story delightsome I'm bent;
Good people, list rev'rently, mind all intent!

DOHA 34

How this lake has come to such glory and fame,
And how it has spread thro' the world,
I'll first tell, recalling both Uma and Siva,
Their bull-blazoned banner unfurled.

CHAUPAI 36

The thought came when Lord Siva's grace did bestow it,
That I, Tulsi, may be this Lake-poem's poet.

I'll give it due charm as my mind may direct,
And trust all good hearers its faults to correct.

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In th' land of good thoughts is the heart a deep vale,
And the scriptures the sea o'er which saints like clouds sail.

As rain from these clouds the Lord Rama's fame pours,
Nectar-sweet, it is pleasing and good it restores.

All sportive and human, the tale of his love
Is of full cleansing power, all filth to remove.

His love and devotion, beyond tongue and pen,
Are as sweetness and coolness, delightful to men.

These rain drops, when on virtue's rice fields they fall,
Give to Rama's devout ones new life, one and all.

They fall upon good understanding's rich soil,
And by ear-channel gather, then flow without toil

To th' fair spot where settles the lake of the soul,
Ages-old now and charming, life-giving and cool.

DOHA 35

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

The four conversations that make up this story,
With charm and divine wisdom blent,
Are roads to this beautiful, auspicious lake,
The four easiest ways of descent.

CHAUPAI 37

The books seven make seven steps for alighting,
The eyes and the mind of true wisdom delighting;

The Lord's glory, marred by no limit or chance,
I will show as the Lake's deep and lovely expanse;

Life human of Rama and Sita's the water;
My similes o'er it like wavelets I scatter.

The stanzas are each like a thick lotus-bed,
Where as pearl-shells poetic devices are spread.

The stanzas are given in different measures,
Like many-hued lilies with each its own pleasures.

The meaning and language and sweet sentiment
Are the nectar and pollen and ravishing scent.

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Fair deeds are the thick swarms of bees oft returning;
And swans are the thoughts of true temp'rance and learning.

While harmony, discord, variety poetic
Like varied fish blend here in beauty aesthetic.

Life's four great aims—wealth, passion, duty, release;
All the study of knowledge and wisdom's decrees;

The nine motives¶; with penance, pray'r, thought, self-control;
All these are the creatures that live in the pool.

Like many-hued water-birds are the sweet songs,
Sung for those to whose great names and deeds praise belongs.

The saints gather round like a mango-tree grove;
Over all like fair spring hovers reverent love.

The thoughts on devoutness, forgiveness, compassion,
Are like trees and creepers spread canopy-fashion.

The flow'rs vows and temperance; knowledge the fruit;
The sap love for Rama's feet; scripture the root;

While all other various stories and features
Are cuckoos and parrots and other winged creatures.

DOHA 36

The hearer's emotion is like a fair garden,
The beautiful birds his delight;
The mind is the gard'ner who pours out love's water
Refreshing from eye-vessels bright.

CHAUPAI 38

The people who sing of these deeds with due thought
Are the guards of the lake for their carefulness sought.

The people who constantly listen with rev'rence
Are lords of the garden to whom gods yield def'rence.

All sensual people are like cranes and crows,
The wretches who never come near where this flows;

¶ The nine motives of verse are: erotic, comic, elegiac, heroic, tragic, melancholic, satiric, didactic and sensational.

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For here are no stories like snails, frogs and scum,
Nothing lustful and sensu'l; for such they would come!

Their hope disappointed would be if they got here;
The things greedy crows and cranes look for are not here.

Distressingly hard is the way to this lake,
And without Rama's grace none the journey can make.

'Tis evil companions make fearsome the way;
Like tigers and snakes are the things that they say.

Home duties and things that distract all the time
Are the steep stony mountains, each one hard to climb.

Dense woods are our pleasures, our passions, our pride;
Our errors and falsehoods are streams deep and wide.

DOHA 37

The men who have no staff of faith for support,
And who saints as companions forsake,
In whose heart no love for Lord Rama has place,
Such can never arrive at this lake.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

CHAUPAI 39

Yet more! Tho' one starts and goes on league by league,
He may meet with the fever of wearing fatigue;

Once there, folly's numbness may come o'er his heart,
Thus in bathing he carelessly fails to take part;

To drink from the water is also neglected;
He proudly turns back with no fruit he expected.

If asked why the pilgrimage soon was resigned,
He excuses himself and the lake is maligned.

But no hindrance whatever the trav'ller deters
Upon whom Rama looks and his kindness confers.

Such men in these waters with reverence bathe
And ne'er take from the three ills of life any scathe.

All those who are Rama's sincere devotees
Never will leave this lake, here the mind is at ease.

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If you wish to bathe in this lake too, my brother,
Then keep the good man as companion, no other.

To see this lake spiritu'l needs spirit vision;
My poet's mind here was well cleansed from confusion.

Deep rapture within my heart made its abode;
The fountain of love and of longing o'erflowed,

And poured itself into my poetry's stream;
As water the Lord Rama's praise was my theme.

'Tis like the fair Sarju, the fount of all rapture,
Its banks are the teachings of life and of scripture.

Born thus in the mind's lake, this river is pure,
And will sweep away all evil growth from its shore.

DOHA 38

The banks hold towns, cities and hamlets, like three kinds
Of hearers—saved, seekers, ambitious;
The gath'ring of saints is like Avadh unequalled,
The place filled with all that's auspicious.

CHAUPAI 40

The Sarju-like stream of Lord Rama's renown
To the Ganges-like river, devotion, flows down.

His warlikeness too, with young Lakshman his brother,
Like th' great river Sone seeks that goal and no other.

As 'tween the two streams shines the Ganges divine,
Between wisdom and temp'rance devotion doth shine.

From three mouths three rivers—the three ills thence fleeing—
As one seek the ocean of Rama's own being.

This lake-born stream when with the heav'nly stream blent,
Gives heart-cleansing to those who will listen intent.

Within the main theme many stories are met,
As upon the stream's banks woods and gardens are set.

In the wedding of Uma and Siva one finds
Countless details, like fish of all colours and kinds.

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When Rama was born we find glad celebrating,
Like water-borne circles and waves fascinating.

DOHA 39

The real boyish ways of the four royal brothers
Are fine many-hued lotus flowers;
The virtues of king, queen and courtiers are bees
And birds hovering round the lake's bowers.

CHAUPAI 41

The story of Sita's own free wedding choice,
Reflecting the water's gleam, makes one rejoice.

The various questions are boats on the river;
The answers are boatmen, all willing and clever.

We hear, with the story, the hearers debating,
Like travellers on the banks fussing and waiting.

Like loud rushing torrent comes Parsuram's rage;
Its force at the banks Rama's soft words assuage.

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

Rama's wedding with that of his three brothers brings
The flood-waves of joy giving hope to all things.

There come thrills of joy with the hearing and telling,
Like virtuous bathers in water upswelling.

When royal insignia for Rama's prepared,
There is joy as in festival gath'rings is shared.

Kaikeyi's ill deeds settle like water scum,
As with bitter fruits many calamities come.

DOHA 40

The goodness of Bharat then comes like true worship,
All ills to dispel and bring peace;
Like cranes, crows and filthiness, villainous vices
Have also been given a place.

CHAUPAI 42

A stream at all six seasons flowing and pure
Is Rama's fame, ever enchanting and sure;

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The winter's the wedding of god and hill-maiden,¶
And Rama's glad birth the next season dew-laden;

His wedding's bright story, with eager crowds thronging,
Is spring, king of seasons, fulfilling all longing;

Hot summer's his dread banishment to the jungle,
The journey's the hot wind and rays that then mingle;

As th' rich rainy season refreshes the fields,
So his conquest o'er demons to gods blessing yields;

The gentleness, greatness and bliss of his reign,
Like the bounteous autumn give joy once again.

The unrivalled virtues of Sita giv'n here
Are the water incomp'rably holy and clear;

Its coolness is Bharat's fine spirit and ways,
Reliable always and far beyond praise.

DOHA 41

The fond looks and words, the fond meeting and greeting,
The fond love and bright merriment,
And the fine brother-feeling among the four brothers,
Are th' water's sweet flavour and scent.

CHAUPAI 43

My own humble longings and pray'rs are no failing,
But pure water's bright, bubbling freshness upwelling.

'Tis marvellous water, by hearing effective
It satisfies thirst, removes all that's defective.

This water the true love of Rama revives,
And all sin of this evil age from our midst drives;

Dispels all life's weariness; thirst satisfies;
And removing all pain, want and guilt, peace supplies.

Quenched is all passion, pride, fury, ungodliness;
Increased all insight and all true unworldliness.

¶ Siva and Parvati.

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All who here with reverence bathe and drink ever,
Will find their hearts free from all sin and dread fever.

The fearful, whose hearts in this water ne'er lave,
Are all lost in this evil age; such none can save;

All helpless in longing and suff'ring they wander,
Like deers mirage-seeking their strength vainly squander.

DOHA 42

As far as I'm able I've told of the water's
Great virtues; my mind I immerse.
Recalling Lord Shankar and his dear Bhavani¶,
The fair story now I'll rehearse.

His aid thus securing, my heart I place lowly
At Lord Rama's feet, blessed station,
And give at their meeting the Saints Yajnavalkya's
And Bharadvaja's conversation.

CHAUPAI 44

PRAISE OF RAMA'S NAME AND STORY

At Prayag the saint Bharadvaja is living,
And always devotion to Rama he's giving;

Austere, quiet, temp'rate, for others he feels,
Pursuing and skilled in the highest ideals.

In Maghṭ, when the sun into Capricorn enters
Great crowds visit this, chief of all pilgrim centers;

Here heav'nly ones gather and here gather men,
All to bathe, where three streams meet, in rev'rence again.

They worship at Madhava's lotus-like feet,
Touch the fig-tree divine and with joy thus complete,

They visit the hermitage pleasing and pure
Of devout Bharadvaja, a place to allure.

All sages and saints who for bathing have come,
While staying here make this their hostel and home;

¶ Siva and Uma.
† Early spring month.

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They bathe as the day breaks, their joyous hearts raise,
Then gather to talk of and sing the Lord's praise.

DOHA 43

The one divine being, the true life religious,
And th' essence of truth they expound;
But chiefly devotion to God that with knowledge
And true self-denial is found.

CHAUPAI 45

Thus all through the month, bathing every day,
Each pilgrim at length takes his own homeward way.

The joy is repeated when thus ev'ry year,
For their festival bathing the saints gather here.

At one time when festive observance was done,
And all of the worshipping pilgrims had gone,

'Twas then Bharadvaja the feet held restrained
Of the wise Yajnavalkya and him thus detained.

He washed with all rev'rence his guest's lotus feet
And respectfully led him to th' worthiest seat;

He lauded the saint with all courtesy due,
And then uttered these words in a voice clear and low:

"My master, one doubt there is troubles me sore;
"Your hands hold the essence of all sacred lore;

"To tell of my doubt I'm afraid and ashamed;
"But if I don't tell it I'm hopelessly maimed.

DOHA 44

"My lord, 'tis the teaching of saints in their wisdom,
"Of scripture too 'tis the refrain,
"He who to his master his heart does not open
"Can never true knowledge attain.

CHAUPAI 46

"I know this and lay then my ignorance bare;
"Have pity, my master, dispel doubt and care.

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"The song of the scriptures and saints is the same,
"Unbounded the pow'r of the Lord Rama's name.

"Unceasing this name utters Siva eternal,
"Of knowledge the source and of all things supernal.

"In this world four types of things living are found;
"If dying at Kashi for heaven they're bound.

"This too is by Lord Rama's pow'r, O my teacher;
"Kind Siva enjoins it thus on ev'ry creature.

"Then who is this Rama? I ask who is he?
"Be kind and instruct me, my lord, even me.

"One Rama there is, he of Avadh the prince,
"Whose deeds are well known thro' the wide world long since;

"He met endless suff'ring by loss of his wife,
"With Ravan he fought and in rage took his life.

DOHA 45

"Pray, is it this Rama, or is it another
"Whose name Siva too must repeat?
"Now ponder and tell me, the myst'ry discerning,
"O thou of true wisdom the seat.

YAJNA-VALKYA AND BHARADVAJA

CHAUPAI 47

"Sir, tell me the story in full, that my doubt
"And dark mystery may be completely wiped out."

Then Saint Yajnavalkya replied with a smile,
"Lord Rama's true greatness you know all the while;

"For you are his servant in thought, word and deed;
"But I know your wiles! You are smart when there's need!

"You wish me to tell Rama's virtues mysterious,
"That's why you question, so simple and serious.

"Listen, my son, mind intent on his glory,
"As now I repeat once again Rama's story.

"It conquers all error, as Kalika dread
"Once conquered the monster who demon hosts led.

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"That same story satisfies all thirsty saints,
"As do moonbeams the partridge, who drinks them or faints.
"That same doubt and question Bhawani expressed;
"Lord Siva then told the tale at her behest.

DOHA 46

"The things that the goddess and god said conversing,
"As far as I'm able I'll tell;
"The tale of what happened and wherefore and when,
"Which if heard saints' distress can dispel."

CHAUPAI 48

'Twas once on a time in this world's second age
That the Lord Siva went to Agastya the sage,
And with him went Uma from whom all life springs;
The saint gave them honour as lords of all things.

Agastya the story of Rama recited;
Lord Siva, on hearing, was greatly delighted.
Of faith in the Lord then the hermit enquired,
And deeming him fit, Siva told as desired.

Thus hearing and telling the Lord Rama's praise,
The god of the mountain remained there some days.
Then asking permission, since guests they had come,
The god and the goddess returned to their home.

Lord Vishnu, to conquer the trials of earth,
In the fam'ly of Raghu had taken his birth;
The throne had resigned at his father's command,
And now to the Dandaka forest was banned.

DOHA 47

"How may I gain of Lord Rama a vision?"
While journeying Siva did ponder,
"In secret form is he incarnate, but then
"If I go all will know it and wonder."

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SORATHA 5

High tumult was in Siva's heart;
But Uma, his wife, nothing knew of the reason;
His eyes longed to see on their part,
But his mind was afraid lest men know it, says Tulsi.

CHAUPAI 49

"For Ravan the boon, death at man's hand, fulfilling,
"To make Brahma's word true the Lord is thus willing;

"Not meeting him," Siva said, "I shall be sorry."
But no plan seemed fitting, despite thought and worry.

And as Siva thus in deep thought was embedded,
The terrible Ravan, the demon ten-headed,

Took Marich the vile as companion and aid,
And of him a deer false and beguiling he made.

The treacherous fool carried off Sita fair,
The Lord's power not knowing, nor yet did he care.

SIVA'S VISION

The brothers returning from hunting the deer
Wept sore when they saw the hut bare and drew near.

Like a man in bereavement was Rama distraught,
As the two brothers all thro' the wood Sita sought.

He who neither union nor disunion knows,
Was seen here distressed, in bereavement's dread throes.

DOHA 48

A mystery deep are the Lord Rama's ways,
Known only to good men and wise;
While those of dull mind, under foolish illusion,
Must see them in different guise.

CHAUPAI 50

Of Rama a glimpse Siva got at that moment,
The sight moved his heart in a glad thrilling foment.

His eyes drank their fill at this sea, form sublime,
But to make himself known seemed unwise at this time,

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So Passion's destroyer returned with this theme,
"All hail, thou world's hope, thou true bliss, thou supreme!"

'Twas thus, with his wife, Siva, mercy's full ocean,
Went on his way home, thrilling oft with emotion.

But Sati¶ her lord's deep delight could discern
And found her heart filled with both doubt and concern:

"Great Siva, with praise universal as Lord,
"By gods and by men and by sages adored,

"To human prince has he this reverence shown,
"And called him Supreme, True Bliss, Saviour Alone!

"Just now at this vision his joy is so great
"That his love overwhelms him, like flood in full spate!

DOHA 49

"The Supreme One unlimited, unborn, unmoved,
"Partless, effortless, unrelated,
"By scriptures too uncomprehended, Oh how
"In man's form is he incarnated?

CHAUPAI 51

"When Vishnu for sake of the gods takes man's guise,
"He still is, like Siva, all knowing, all wise;

"The lord of good, wisdom's home, evil's o'ercomer;
"How comes he an ignorant, wife-seeking roamer?

"But words of the Lord of the Hills cannot fail,
"All knowing is Siva, all men know this well."

Such then were the doubtings that troubled her mind,
Nor in her own heart any light could she find.

Altho' from his wife doubt nor question was heard,
All hearts knowing well, Siva knew ev'ry word.

Said he, "You've the nature of woman, my dear;
"Just listen and cast from your mind doubt and fear.

¶ Name of Siva's wife in her former birth.

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"The one of whose story Agastya has spoken,
"Of whose love as worthy of trust I gave token,
"The one always worshipped by saint and by seer,
"He is my own lord, the divine Raghubir.¶

CHHAND 2

"He whom seers and sages and saints in all ages,
"With pure, holy mind contemplate;
"He whose highest praises all scripture upraises,
"Tho' far beyond man to relate;
"He all things pervading, Lord Brahma all aiding,
"The lord of all creatures and myst'ry,
"The faithful to aid, now himself man is made,
"In Raghu's line gracing all hist'ry."

SORATHA 6

Thus Siva declaimed for a while,
But on her it seemed he could make no impression;
Then said he again with a smile,
The Lord's ways so strange and deceptive perceiving:

SATI'S FOLLY

CHAUPAI 52

"Since still you are harb'ring such doubts in your breast,
"Go you, for yourself put my words to the test;
"While here in this fig-tree's cool shade I will stay,
"Until you return, then we'll go on our way.
"Go now and with thoughtful discernment endeavour
"To banish your doubt and confusion forever."
So Sati returned at Lord Siva's suggestion,
But "What to do now?" was her problem and question.
There Siva stayed seated, but deeply reflecting,
"She'll come to some harm, not the good she's expecting;

¶ Another name of Rama.

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"If nothing I say such strong doubting will banish,
"Since fate is perverse, hope of good then must vanish;
"Fulfilled must be all things that Rama ordains;
"We argue and change naught! What will be remains."
With thoughtful mind Siva thus praised the name dear;
While Sati to Rama, joy's fountain, drew near.

DOHA 50

Again and again deep she pondered, and then,
The fair form of Sita assuming,
She went on ahead and stood right in the pathway
Where he, king of heaven, was coming.

CHAUPAI 53

There Lakshman first saw her and noting her guise,
He stood there perplexed, overwhelmed with surprise;
He nothing could say, but he seriously wondered;
Restraining his mind, on the Lord's pow'r he pondered.
The lord divine, Rama, pierced all her deceiving;
All things does he see, the heart's deep thought perceiving;
The One, whom recalling all ignorance goes,
Supreme over all is he; all things he knows.
And yet to deceive even him Sati tried;
But such is the womanly nature and pride.
Then Rama, his own pow'r delusive well-known,
Addressed her with smiles and in soft kindly tone;
He greeted her, joining his hands in respect,
And told her his name, with his father's, direct;
He asked her, "And where's your lord, Siva the good?
"And why are you wand'ring alone in this wood?"

DOHA 51

Thus hearing his voice and his words sweet and serious,
Deep bashful awe on her weighed;

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She set out again to where Siva was waiting,
Her heart in deep thought held and swayed.

CHAUPAI 54

"The wise words of Siva I've flouted," she says,
"I have shown up to Rama my ignorant ways.

"And now for my lord what reply can I find?"
Such torturing thoughts as these troubled her mind.

Lord Rama knew well the distress of her heart
And to her revealed his great glory in part.

Strange visions saw Sati as onward she sped;
There were Rama, his wife and his brother ahead;

But then looking backward she saw him again,
With Sita and Lakshman in glorious train.

Wherever she looked, there she saw him enthroned;
By sages and saints was his majesty owned.

She saw Sivas, Brahmas, Vishnus beyond telling,
And each one the others in glory excelling;

SATI'S FOLLY

Saw all the divine ones in varied array,
All owning in worship the Lord Rama's sway.

DOHA 52

She saw three goddesses—herself, Sarasvati
And Lakshmi—before her own eyes,
Incomp'rable, countless, and varied in likeness,
Each matching her lord's form and guise.

CHAUPAI 55

Wherever the Lord Rama's form met her view,
She saw with their wives the great gods gathered too.

And with them were also the forms of all creatures;
All these she beheld, countless types, forms and features.

The worshipping gods changed in garb and in mien;
But Rama himself in but one form was seen.

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There with his two dear ones she saw Ramas many;
Of changes and varying saw she not any!

The same Sita, Rama and Lakshman, as one!
By this awesome sight was poor Sati undone.

Her heart all a-tremble, all consciousness going,
She sank to the ground with eyes closed, nothing knowing.

Then, consciousness waking, she opened her eyes,
And saw naught of the vision, in trembling surprise.

But bowing within at the Lord Rama's feet,
She went to where Siva had taken his seat.

DOHA 53

As Sati came near where the Lord Siva sat,
He smiled as he asked how she fared;
"Come, tell me," he said, "how you tested the Lord;
"With me let your secret be shared."

CHAUPAI 56

With Lord Rama's glory in mem'ry still clear,
From Siva she kept the truth, prompted by fear.

"My dear lord, I put no test to him," she said,
"Before him I simply, like you, bowed my head.

"I know well that nothing you say is untrue;
"My heart puts its confidence wholly in you."

When Siva considered these things in his heart,
He saw clearly at once how his wife played her part.

He bowed to the pow'r of Lord Rama's illusion,
The pow'r that moved Sati to falsehood's confusion.

Then thus he gave voice to his heart's deep reflection:
"What God wills must be; it can know no deflection."

Thus thinking, his heart was in anguish consumed,
"My Sati the fair Sita's form has assumed;

"If I show her love now and take her as wife,
"I shall close up faith's road and thus mar my whole life.

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DOHA 54

"My love is too great for me e'er to forget it,
"And yet to indulge it is sin."
Aloud not a word of his thoughts did he utter,
But such was his suff'ring within.

CHAUPAI 57

Then with his heart lowly at Rama's feet bowed,
And pond'ring his name, this the vow that he vowed:
"Never again in this body, I swear,
"Will I have any contact with Sati, tho' dear."
Thus pondering, Siva—on this vow intent,
Still Rama's name utt'ring, his steps homeward bent.
And as he so journeyed, a heav'nly voice spake,
"All glory to Siva, whose troth naught can shake;
"None else upon such high resolving would dare!
"None else such devotion's high testing could bear!"

SATI'S FOLLY

Then Sati was plunged by this voice in deep thought,
And humbly from Siva its meaning she sought;
"O source of all truth and all kindness, my lord,
"Pray tell me, what vow this of which I've just heard."
But tho' she besought him again and again,
He nothing would tell her, naught could she obtain.

DOHA 55

Then Sati herself made a guess at the answer,
"The all-knowing Lord knows it all;
"He knows I deceived him; now on this dull woman
"The fruit of her folly must fall."

SORATHA 7

Mixed water and milk sell as one;
And love is the same in its nature and union;

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Their oneness is broken and done
If falsehood's acidity ever falls on them.

CHAUPAI 58

The thing she had done late she pondered and knew;
Now deep and untold was the pain she went thro'.
"Siva, deep ocean where kindness is stored,
"Openly says of my sin not a word;
"But he is pained as he sees me, I know;
"Now he abandons me, cause of his woe."
No word could she say, knowing well her deep wrong;
A fever burned in her, a fire fierce and strong.
When Siva beheld her so deeply distrest,
He told pleasant stories to bring ease and rest;
He told many legends to her on the road;
So came they to Kailas, their mountain abode.
There once more recalling his vow to his mind;
He posed 'neath a tree contemplation to find;
His nat'ral form taken, his members controlled,
Unbounded his trance and unbroken its hold.

DOHA 56

Poor Sati abode in Kailas all the while,
Her heart overcome with her grief;
But no one her secret could know or could share,
Each day age-long, nowhere relief.

CHAUPAI 59

Upon her new worry and grief ever weighed,
"Oh, when shall I pass from this suff'ring?" she prayed,
"I who the Lord Raghupati have flouted;
"I who the word of my husband have doubted;
"The fruit of my wrong to me Providence pays,
"Ever fitting and just are His doings and ways.

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"But now, O Divine One, nor think nor contrive
"Thus severed from Siva to keep me alive."

Mere words could not tell all her heart's deep distress,
But Rama recalling, she asked him to bless:

"If, O my lord, thou art good to the meek,
"Pain's overcomer, of whom scriptures speak;

"If love for Siva, true love, claims me now;
"If in thought, word and deed true is my vow;

"Then hands clasped humbly I bring thee my plea;
"Now from this body, yes now, set me free."

DOHA 57

"O thou, all impartial One, hear me my Lord,
"For me a way quickly devise,
"By which without pain I may die and this burden
"May pass that unbearable lies."

CHAUPAI 60

DAKSHA'S SACRIFICE

The royal goddess, thus so badly distressed,
By deep and unspeakable anguish oppressed,

Spent eighty-sev'n thousand long years; and then broke
His trance and the immortal Siva awoke.

The Lord Rama's name he began to repeat.
His waking to Sati thus known, at his feet

She with rev'rent humility prostrate did bend;
And a place at his side to her did he extend;

The Lord Rama's praise then began he to sing.
Great Daksha¶ at that time was reigning as king;

The Creator, seeing his fitness and worth,
Had made him the king of all kingdoms on earth.

When thus his dominion was spread far and wide,
The heart of King Daksha was swollen with pride;

¶ Sati's father.

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For ne'er in this world was there man whom high station
And pow'r has not plunged in deep intoxication.

DOHA 58

So King Daksha called all the priests and the sages;
A great sacrifice he prepared;
And then, with due honours, the gods he invited;
All who could claim right in it shared.

CHAUPAI 61

Their way all the gods with their wives thither wended,
By all their great retinue heav'nly attended;

Except Vishnu, Brahma and Siva—these three,
All went in their chariots, a great sight to see.

'Twas thus Sati saw as she lifted her eyes
This varied train trav'lling the path of the skies.

So sweet were the songs of the heav'nly ones fair,
That hearing, the saints would be wooed from their prayer.

It pleased Sati much when the cause Siva told,
That Daksha, her father, would sacrifice hold.

She thought, " If my lord for this cause will allow,
"I will spend a few days at my own home right now."

The thought of the parting and pain made her halt;
And how dare she ask him rememb'ring her fault?

At length taking courage, with some hesitation,
In low loving accents she made supplication:

DOHA 59

"Abode of all goodness, my lord, at my home
"This festival means great rejoicing;
"If you will permit me, I too wish to share
"In the reverent praise they are voicing."

CHAUPAI 62

"That's good," Siva said, " I'd be greatly delighted,
" But one thing forbids; you have not been invited;

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"King Daksha his daughters has called; they're expected;
"But due to his quarrel with me, you're neglected.

"In Brahma's court he was once long since offended
"At me, and since then has an insult intended.

"Dear wife, if without being called you should go,
"All love and respect would be lost, that you know.

"One goes, tho' not called, nothing doubting to see
"Relations and others who friendly may be;

"But no good can come if you go to the place
"Where waits for you enmity, spite and disgrace."

Again and again did Lord Siva thus plead;
But cursed by her fate, not a word would she heed.

He gave his last word in this argument strong,
"To go there unasked is to me wholly wrong."

DOHA 60

But when he saw all his endeavours were useless,
No reason could now make her stay,
He gave his chief ministers to her as escort,
And sent her with them on her way.

DAKSHA'S SACRIFICE

CHAUPAI 63

But when she arrived at her father's abode,
From fear of King Daksha none courtesy showed—

None but her own mother, who gave her kind greeting,
And also her sisters, who smiled at their meeting.

Her father did not even ask how she fared,
But, seeing her, rage like a fire in him flared.

Bhawani the sacrifice then went to view,
But saw nothing offered to Siva, tho' due.

The words of her husband she then called to mind,
And hot burned her anger this insult to find.

Now all former suff'ring as nothing became
Compared with this fever's intense searing flame,

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In this life one meets pain of numerous kinds,
But none like the slights one from fam'ly folk finds.
The more she thought on it, the hotter her rage;
Her mother could do naught this fire to assuage.

DOHA 61

Insult to Siva to her was intol'rable,
Nor would she be pacified;
But facing the people all shrinking around her,
In wild wrathful accents she cried:

CHAUPAI 64

"O honoured ones gathered here, list to my word!
"This insult to Siva you've uttered and heard;
"At once the dread fruits of this all will receive,
"And my father in bitter repentance will grieve.
"When insult to saints and the high gods is spoken,
"The law of true honour is shown by this token—
"If possible cut out the blasphemer's tongue;
"Or leave the place, closing one's ears to the wrong.
"The world's Supreme Spirit, great God, sin's foe ever,
"The father of all and of all good the giver,
"From him my mad father withholds honour due;
"But having my birth from him, what can I do?
"I therefore will now from this body depart,
"The moon-crested, bull-blazoned lord in my heart."
Divine fire then burned up her body before them;
A great wave of grief and lamenting swept o'er them.

DOHA 62

On hearing of Sati's death, Siva's attendants
The off'rings began to o'erthrow;
But Bhrigu the saint tried to save them, in fear
Lest the sacrifice they must forego.

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CHAUPAI 65

When Siva heard what had become of his queen,
In anger Birbhadra he sent to the scene,

Who came and destroyed all the off'rings preserved,
And gave to each god just the fruits he deserved.

What happened to Daksha to all men is known;
Such happens when anger to Siva is shown.

This story is one that is now spread world-wide;
To tell it but briefly I therefore have tried.

Of Vishnu this boon Sati asked at her death,
That she might love Siva with each birth and breath;

So that's why she came as Parvati to earth,
And as daughter of King Himalaya took birth.

From the time that she came to the mountain-king's home,
Success and prosperity to it have come;

Many hermits and saints here and there happy live,
Each one where the mountain-king fit place may give.

SATI'S
RE-BIRTH
AS PARVATI

DOHA 63

Many trees grow there, all varied and fruitful,
And all ever blooming and green;
While over the hills and the rocks many mines
Of most beautiful jewels are seen.

CHAUPAI 66

In every stream naught but pure water flows;
Ev'ry bird, beast and bee truest happiness knows.

Their natural enmity all creatures lose;
To live there in love is the way they all choose.

With Parvati, glory thus came to these hills;
Such glory as when Rama's love the heart fills.

New joys in the king's house appeared day by day;
The gods sang its honour and praises alway.

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Sage Narad, when he of these things heard the fame,
To see for himself to the mountain realm came.

The king gave him welcome with courtesy meet,
His feet washed, and led him to hon'rable seat.

He then, with the queen, bowed his head to the ground,
And the saint's bathing water was sprinkled around.

The king told his story, no hind'ring restraint;
Then calling his daughter, led her to the saint.

DOHA 64

"To you," said he, "past, present, future are open,
"The universe you can traverse;
"My master, consider, and of my dear daughter
"The ill and the good things rehearse."

CHAUPAI 67

The sage smiling answered in voice low and mild,
"A mine of all goodness, O king, is your child.

"Her virtue, good looks, wisdom justly are claimed,
"Whether Uma, Bhawani or Ambika named.

"On this maid, with character pleasing endowed,
"By her husband true love will be ever bestowed.

"As firm as a rock will her good fortune be;
"Her parents thro' her lasting glory will see.

"Her worship and honour the whole world will hail
"To those who will serve her no good thing shall fail.

"Rememb'ring her name other wives in their time
"The sword's edge of wifely devotion will climb.

"These good things I see in your daughter, O king;
"But also a few ills before you I bring.

"Your daughter to wed with a husband is fated
"Who'll be with such worth and such beauty ill mated.

DOHA 65

"A man with no beauty, no honour, no love,
"One forsaking all ties and ascetic,

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"Hair matted, and naked, and hideously clad;
"Her hand shows this future pathetic."

CHAUPAI 68

They knew these things true that the saint had thus voiced;
Distressed were her parents, but Uma rejoiced.

To Narad their case was with mystery fraught;
They showed the same signs, but so diff'rent their thought;

Parvati, her maidens, her father and mother,
Their eyes tear-filled, body thrilled, each like the other.

These things Uma kept in her mind, for she knew
The words of the gods and the saints must come true.

Within her heart true love for Siva up-sprung,
"But how can I meet him?" This doubt her heart wrung.

She kept her love hid, for the time was not fitting,
And went back to where her companions were sitting.

SATI'S
RE-BIRTH
AS PARVATI

Her parents and friends at the thought were dismayed,
Well knowing the saint's words could never be stayed.

Then, plucking up courage, the mountain-king cried,
"Pray tell me, good master, what plan should be tried."

DOHA 66

"O king," said the sage, "listen now to my word;
"What Providence writes on fate's table,
"That word to erase nor divine one, nor devil,
"Nor man, saint, nor serpent is able.

CHAUPAI 69

"Nevertheless, of a plan I will tell you
"Which, with the help of the gods, may avail you.

"Uma will have such a bridegroom, I hold,
"As I in my answer to you have foretold.

"But all of his failings that I called to mind,
"Yes, all of them in the Lord Siva I find;

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"If therefore a marriage with him can be planned,
"The things will be good that in others are banned.

"Lord Vishnu takes rest with a serpent as couch;
"But the wise in him for this no fault will avouch.

"The sun and the flame eat regardless of taste;
"But none calls them foolish or blind in their haste.

"In water flow things clean and unclean, that's sure;
"But no one would dare call the Ganges impure.

"The sun, fire and water, and all that is strong,
"To such no one ever dares say faults belong.

DOHA 67

"If, then, in proud ignorance any man dares
"To envy such, this is the sequel,
"He lies a whole age in the fire of Gehenna;
"What soul can divinity equal?

CHAUPAI 70

"Consider intoxicants; pure we may think them
"Mixed in Ganges water, but no saint will drink them;

"The Ganges, tho' blended, would holy remain;
"So differ immortal and mortal 'tis plain.

"Lord Siva by nature is infinite power,
"This marriage with him would bring heavenly dower.

"Altho' he is hardly approached and appeased,
"When pain is endured for his sake he is pleased.

"If henceforth strict penance this maid undergoes,
"Lord Siva can transform these dread fated woes.

"Altho' in this world godly husbands abound,
"None other but Siva for her can be found.

"Great blessings he grants and distresses relieves;
"Who serves him true bliss from this ocean receives.

"No hope could be reached unless Siva be served,
"Tho' never from penance and fasting one swerved."

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DOHA 68

With these words and calling upon the divine one,
The saint thus the mountain-king blest;
"Let no fears or doubtings distress you," he counselled,
"It all will turn out for the best."

CHAUPAI 71

To th' court of Lord Brahma the saint then returned;
Hear now what came after—I'll tell as I learned.
To the king, when they two were alone, said the queen:
"The words of the saint so mysteri'us have been;
"If groom there be worthy in fam'ly and line,
"His marriage arrange with this daughter of mine.
"If not, let her stay unwed, be no man's wife;
"For Uma is dearer to me than my life.
"If husband unworthy the king's daughter weds,
"The king will be called worst of dull wooden-heads.
"Be careful, if on this maid's marriage you're bent,
"That later there may be no cause to repent."
No more said the queen; at his feet low she fell;
The king gave reply, moved by love and its spell:
"The cold moon might break out indeed into flame;
"But no word of Narad e'er fruitless became.

SATI'S RE-BIRTH AS PARVATI

DOHA 69

"My dear, put away all anxiety now,
"And on God the All-blessed reflect;
"'Tis He who created our Parvati dear,
"And 'tis He who will bless and protect.

CHAUPAI 72

"If love for our daughter fills truly your heart,
"Go to her and this needed counsel impart:

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"The way to Lord Siva is penance severe;
"There's no other way to escape pain and fear.

"The saint's words with purpose and meaning are pregnant;
"The source of all good he by bull-sign now regnant;¶

"Remembering this, let no doubts have a place;
"Of failings and faults there's in Siva no trace."

She rose with these words in her ears still resounding,
And went to her daughter, her heart with joy bounding.

Her eyes filled with tears when she saw Uma fair;
With love she embraced her and sat with her there.

Again and again to her heart the queen took her,
But naught could she say, pow'r of utt'rance forsook her.

Then answered the mother of all things, all-knowing,
Bhawani, her mother's own girl joy-bestowing:

DOHA 70

"Now listen, dear mother, a vision I've had;
"I'll tell you what thus I have heard;
"A handsome young Brahman has come to me, and
"For my guidance he gave me this word:

CHAUPAI 73

"Go sweet mountain princess, your penance begin;
"The saint's words are true, thus you'll happiness win.

"Your parents with faith both this thought have embraced,
"That penance brings bliss and thus ill is erased.

"By virtue of penance all things Brahma made;
"By this pow'r the path of release Vishnu laid;

"Lord Siva all things by this same pow'r destroys;
"The serpent supporting the world this employs;

"All things for existence on penance depend;
"So practise it, setting your heart on the end."

¶ Siva.

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Amazed the queen heard the maid's words and decision;
She sent for her husband and told him the vision.

Her parents consoling thus in lonely sadness,
Away to her penance went Uma with gladness.

The father and mother, with all near and dear,
Were grief-stricken; naught could they utter or hear.

DOHA 71

Then came Vedasiras, a Brahman devout,
To counsel them in their deep grief;
He told them of Parvati's glory and thus
He brought comfort to all and relief.

CHAUPAI 74

Thus Uma, her lord's dear feet keeping in thought,
Went off to the forest; there penance she wrought.

Delicate was she for all such severity,
But for his sake she embraced strict austerity.

Love growing daily, her body neglecting,
She gave all to fasting and pray'r and reflecting.

PARVATI'S PENANCE

For one thousand years roots and fruits met her wants;
For one hundred years she ate nothing but plants;

On some days she lived on but water and air;
On others less even than this was her fare.

And then for three thousand years naught else she gathered
And ate but the *bel*-tree leaves lying there withered.

At last, even this food foregoing, her name
From Uma was changed and "The Leafless"¶ became.

Then, seeing her body so emaciate,
Said Brahma in voice that made heaven vibrate:

DOHA 72

"Hear me, O maiden, O mountain-king's daughter,
"Soon you'll attain your desire;

¶ Aparna (*parn* is leaf).

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"So give up your suff'rings, he soon will be yours,
"Lord Siva, to whom you aspire.

CHAUPAI 75

"Tho' many the saints and ascetics and sages,
"Like Uma not one in her penance thro' ages;

"So now give good heed to my words and command,
"Believing that true and good ever they stand.

"Your father to call you will very soon come;
"Then do not resist, but return to your home.

"Moreover, when come to you saintly ones seven,
"Take that as confirming this sure voice from heaven."

When to her this heav'nly voice came from the height,
The mountain maid's body was thrilled with delight.

The story of Uma thus far I have told;
What happened to Siva I now will unfold.

When Sati her body and life had forsaken,
Lord Siva to strict life ascetic had taken,

His rosary—Lord Rama's name—ever telling,
And present where'er Rama's praises were swelling.

DOHA 73

Siva, abode of true knowledge and happiness,
Free from lust, passion and pride,
Wanders the earth with his heart fixed on Vishnu;
Thro' him spreads rejoicing world-wide.

CHAUPAI 76

He sometimes expounds to the saints wisdom's claims,
And sometimes the virtues of Rama proclaims.

Tho' passionless, he—the all-wise and all-good—
The pain of an absent one dear understood.

Thro' many long ages these ways he pursued,
While deep love for Rama was daily renewed.

Then Rama, this firm love of Siva observing
And seeing his path of devotion unswerving,

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Made himself known, full of grace and benignity,
He who is truth, virtue, power and dignity.

Siva he praised, on his fealty enlarged,
"None other such strict vows has ever discharged."

And then he told to him Parvati's full story;
He told of her birth and he told of her glory;

He told of her penance, her love and her troth;
He told all at length; then he said, loving both:

DOHA 74

"O Siva, if true is the love you declare
"For me, hear and heed my behest;
"At once make this dear mountain maiden your wife,
"Go now and fulfil my request."

CHAUPAI 77

Said Siva, "Tho' by my own feelings impeded,
"The word of my master may not go unheeded.

"I bow to your will, your command I obey,
"For this is our duty and truth's only way.

PARVATI'S PENANCE

"The way of true weal is to do without question
"One's parents' and teachers' command or suggestion.

"Great giver of good, none e'er greater was known;
"I therefore, my master, make your will my own."

Lord Rama was pleased with these words and this spirit,
So full of devotion, discernment and merit.

To Siva he said, "You have held to your vow;
"To heart take the words I have given you now."

With these words the vision then passed from his sight;
But Siva retained it at heart day and night.

The seven saints came to see Siva just then;
He made request courteous of these holy men.

DOHA 75

"Pray go to Parvati," he said, "and for me
"Put to trial and testing her love,

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"And then send her father to bring her again
"To his home and his doubts thus remove."

CHAUPAI 78

Delighted, the saints this petition received,
And happily came to where Parvati lived.

But when they came to her, she seemed to their eyes
Like Penance in living and bodily guise.

They said, "Mountain maiden, pray tell us the reason
"For penance so hard and for such a long season.

"Who is it you worship and what would you gain?
"Pray tell us the secret, make mystery plain."

Their words reached Parvati engaged in devotion;
She answered in voice deep and warm with emotion.

"I hesitate greatly my secret to tell;
"You'll laugh as you think me bound in folly's spell.

"But I am determined, I'll heed no instructing,
"Tho' like one his house upon water constructing.

"The word Narad gave to me confidence brings,
"Altho' 'tis like trying to fly without wings.

"Ye saintly ones, see where my folly is ranging;
"I want as my husband Lord Siva unchanging."

DOHA 76

The saints at these words smiled and said, "Mountain maid,
"You were born of a rock it is true;
"You have Narad's counsel, but who heeding him
"The real joys of a home ever knew?

CHAUPAI 79

"By his word King Daksha's sons, knowledge to gain,
"Went wand'ring afar and ne'er saw home again.

"'Twas Narad destroyed Chitraketu's line too;
"By him ended also Kanak-kashipu.

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"The man or the woman who Narad's word heeds,
"Becomes a poor wanderer begging his needs.

"At heart he's deceitful, tho' outwardly good;
"He'd make all men like to himself if he could.

"And now in the truth of his words, you, believing,
"As husband want one always gloomy and grieving;

"With garland of skulls, without passion or shame,
"Unclad, snake-bound, lacking home, fam'ly and name!

"What bride with such groom had joy e'en for a day?
"Deceived by that rascal, you've been led astray.

"By others urged, Siva made Sati his wife,
"But soon gave her up and thus ended her life.

DOHA 77

"No worry or thought now disturbs him; by begging
"He lives, if one 'living' can term it;
"Now say, could a woman e'er stay in the house,
"Or live with such self-centered hermit?

PARVATI'S PENANCE

CHAUPAI 80

"And now, if what we have to say you will heed,
"We'll bring you a husband who's worthy indeed;

"One handsome and hon'rable, courtly and pleasing,
"Whose fame by the scriptures is sung without ceasing;

"Vaikunth is his home and all faultless his ways;
"He, Lakshmi's great lord, naught but goodness displays

"With such a husband we'd have you united."
Parvati answered, her face with smiles lighted,

"Born of a rock, truly rock-like am I;
"Sooner than give up my purpose I'd die.

"Gold, as you know, from the rock is obtained;
"Tho' burnt, yet its nature and worth are retained.

"Narad's word trusting, I'll keep the vow made;
"My house filled or empty be, I'm not afraid!

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"He who his teacher's word will not believe,
"Never can hope joy or wealth to receive.

DOHA 78

"Siva may be full of faults, as you say,
"And Vishnu be naught but perfection;
"But only with that thing the heart is concerned
"To which one is bound by affection.

CHAUPAI 81

"If, saintly ones, at the first we had met;
"Then on your counsel my heart I would set;
"Now for my Siva my life I have spent,
"How then his good and ill weigh and repent?
"If in your purpose your heart's firm and sure,
"If without match-making you can't endure;
"Then, busy-bodies, be no longer idle;
"There's many a bride and groom—go make their bridal!
"But tho' in this way lives a million be led,
"I'll either wed Siva or stay thus unwed,
"The word Narad gave me I never will spurn,
"Tho' Siva himself try my hopes to o'erturn.
"The mother of worlds, here I fall down before you;
"Too long you have stayed; now return I implore you."
Seeing her love, with one voice cried the sages,
"Hail to the mother of all worlds and ages.

DOHA 79

"The mother thou, Maya;¶ the father Lord Siva.
"Creation's begetters are ye."
With joy overflowing the saints then departed,
With reverent cry, "Hail to thee!"

¶ Illusion.

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CHAUPAI 82

The saints sought the king and they urged him to come;
Then he, with entreaties, brought Parvati home.
This finished, the seven to Siva returned;
From them the whole story of Uma he learned.
Delighted was Siva, her loyal love knowing;
The saints returned homeward, their joy overflowing.
But Siva his mind and his thought concentrated,
And wholly on Rama again contemplated.
At that time a demon named Tarak arose,
World-famed for the pow'r of his arms and his blows.
The worlds and their rulers he wholly subjected,
The gods robbed, and left them all poor and dejected.
As ageless and deathless, unconquered his might,
He conquered heaven's armies in many a fight.
The gods came to Brahma, to him their plea made;
He saw them completely distressed and dismayed.

SIVA'S CONTEMPLATION

DOHA 80

Then comfort he gave to them with this assurance,
"This demon his last end will meet,
"When of Siva's own seed a son is begotten,
"Your foe he in war will defeat.

CHAUPAI 83

"Give heed to my words and devise now some scheme;
"By God's help success comes, tho' hopeless it seem.
"When Sati in sacrifice went from this earth,
"As the mountain-king's daughter again she had birth.
"Austere now, she hopes to make Siva her own;
"But he sits with mind all absorbed and alone.
"The thing will be doubtful when put to the test,
"But listen to me, this is what I suggest.

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"Send Kama, the great god of passion and love;
"His shafts Siva's mind may awaken and move.

"Then I too will go and will Siva persuade;
"Thus these two in wedded bond one may be made.

"Thus too will the aim of the gods be secured,
"Their danger removed and their good be assured."

Then Brahma they praised and approved as he planned.
Just then came god Kama, his shafts in his hand.

DOHA 81

The gods told their troubles and told him their plan;
He thoughtfully listened the while;
"It bodes me no good if Lord Siva I anger,"
He answered, but spoke with a smile.

CHAUPAI 84

"Yet," said he, "I'll do as you ask, for 'tis chief
"Of scripture's demands to give help and relief.

"The one who for others his life freely gives,
"In saintly men's praises for evermore lives."

With these words he bowed, took his famed bow of flowers,
And left with his helpers to try Love's great powers.

He pondered within as he went on his journey,
"Lord Siva's wrath means death to me in this tourney."

His pow'r far and wide all around him he hurled,
And under his sway thus he brought the whole world.

When he, god of love, over all his wrath scattered,
The bridge of divine law was instantly shattered.

Away went all saintliness, vows, temp'rance, ruth;
All patience, all duty, all knowledge, all truth,

All virtue, austerity, discipline, pray'r;
The armies of conscience all fled as in fear.

CHHAND 3

When forces of Passion, Advanced army fashion,
And over the battle-field spread;

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The pow'rs of discerning, Before the foe turning,
To hide in the scripture-caves fled;
Men asked, "Now what fate, From the gods doth await,
"Who saves us in this mad world's medley?
"'Gainst whom for his daring, Is Kama forth faring,
"In anger with bow and shafts deadly?"

DOHA 82

The whole of creation, things unmoved and moving,
All that male or female are called,
They all gave up honour, gave up all restraining,
And all were by Passion enthralled.

CHAUPAI 85

Love's craving the hearts of all creatures did bind;
The boughs of the trees to the creepers inclined;

In flood rose the rivers to rush to the ocean;
The lakes and the ponds joined as tho' in emotion.

When "soul-less" things moved thus beneath such a spell,
The state and the doings of "souls" who can tell?

KAMA'S DESTRUCTION

In air, land and sea, birds and beasts where'er found,
Forgetting their seasons, by Passion were bound.

The whole world with craving was blind and distraught;
By night as by day ev'ry swan his mate sought.¶

Gods, seraphs and men; snakes and all demon hosts;
All devils and goblins; all spirits and ghosts;

To tell all their state is beyond tongue and pen;
I know all were Passion's disciples just then.

Yes, even the saint, the ascetic and sage,
Vows breaking, became Kama's slave in his rage.

CHHAND 4

When this passionate state, Mastered good men and great,
Who can tell of the lowly and mean?

¶ Traditionally swans part at night.

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He who saw God in all, Now became Passion's thrall;
Lust's object, it only, was seen;

The woman saw naught, But the man and him sought;
The man saw but woman and craved;
For two hours this drama, Was staged by God Kama,
For two hours a world-in-love raved.

SORATHA 8

When all are enamoured of Kama,
Then none in his heart can be steadfast and sure;
The man who is guarded by Rama,
He only can be the exception in this.

CHAUPAI 86

Two full hours the whole world was kept in this state,
Till Kama arrived where the Lord Siva sate.

But when he saw Siva great dread smote him sore;
The world in a moment was normal once more.

At once a great calmness and peace each soul filled,
As comes when a drunkard's wild frenzy is stilled.

At sight of the ruthless, invincible One,
Great Rudra,¶ with dread was the Love-god undone.

Yet, since in retreat untold shame was involved,
A plan he devised; to meet death he resolved.

He brought up at once gladsome spring, royal time;
Each tree and plant blossomed with beauty sublime;

Ev'ry forest and grove, ev'ry garden and pond
Displayed its perfection—here, there and beyond.

In ev'ry place love seemed to burst into fire,
And even unmanly men burned with desire.

CHHAND 5

Thus Love's warmth was such, The dead waked at his touch;
The wild wood's fair blooms could not rest;

¶ Another name for Siva.

KAMA'S
DESTRUC-
TION

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While Kama's true friend, Into flame the fire fanned
The Wind fragrant and cool, full of zest.
Many lotuses rare, Bloomed in ev'ry lake fair;
Above them buzzed bees in their swarms;
Swans, parrots and doves, All were telling their loves;
While nymphs danced and sang, with their charms.

DOHA 83

Despite his devices and stratagems, Kama
And all his great host were defeated;
Unwakened was Siva, unbroken his vigil;
And thus was the Love-god's rage heated.

CHAUPAI 87

He saw near a mango tree, branches outspread.
He climbed it and sat there, all prudence now sped;
He fitted a shaft to his flowery bow,
In rage drew the string and took aim at his foe;
He let fly five arrows, they pierced Siva's heart;
The god's trance was broken, he woke with a start.
A great agitation came over his mind;
Eyes opened, he looked all around cause to find.
On Kama among the fresh leaves fell his look;
His anger was roused, the three worlds from it shook;
His third eye¶ he opened, whose ray deadly flashes;
It lighted on Kama, reduced him to ashes.
The whole world lamented and Love's death bewailed;
The gods feared, but demons this glad event hailed.
The sensual were saddened and all of that breed;
But saints and austere ones from worry were freed.

KAMA'S DESTRUCTION

¶ He has a third eye in the middle of his forehead, opened only in terrible anger and flashing death.

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CHHAND 6

The saints were unfearing; But Kama's death hearing,
His wife, goddess Rati, fell faint;
Then weeping and wailing, With words faint and failing,
To Siva she went with her plaint;
All humble and loving, Pray'rs many and moving
Before him, hands folded, she brought;
The lord always kind, And to mercy inclined,
With these words to comfort her sought:

DOHA 84

"Your husband, O Rati, is now the Unbodied;
"With this name henceforth men will greet him;
"Yet, having no body, he shall pervade all things;
"Now hear how once more you shall meet him.

CHAUPAI 88

"When Krishna in Yadu's line takes incarnation,
"To lift the world's burden and bring it salvation,
"As his son your husband shall be born again;
"Believe me, this word is not spoken in vain."
At this word of Siva glad Rati departed.
A new chapter now of my tale is imparted.
When news to the gods and to Brahma was given,
They went to Vaikunth, to the Lord Vishnu's heaven.
Thence Vishnu and Brahma and all of them went
To meet kindly Siva, all with one intent.
Each one of them praised him, each in his own measure;
The moon-crested Siva received them with pleasure.
The bull-blazoned ocean of kindness then spake:
"Immortals, what led you this journey to take?"
Said Brahma, "My lord, to you all things are known;
"But this I request, as devotion I own;

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DOHA 85

"O love-smitten Shankar,¶ the gods with one mind
"Are all here; by one hope we were led;
"My lord, our desire is that with our own eyes
"We may see you soon happily wed.

CHAUPAI 89

"Make plans, O destroyer of Passion's proud madness,
"To give us the vision of this festive gladness.

"By you Kama died; it is good you restore,
"All-gracious, to Rati her husband once more.

"Great ones by nature, when done with severity,
"Show once again deeds of kindness and charity.

"Parvati limitless penance has suffered;
"Accept her, we pray, and the pray'r she has offered."

He heard Brahma's words, he saw Vishnu agree,
So with joy Siva answered them, "Thus shall it be."

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

The gods, as flow'rs rained on them, beat drums and gongs;
Cried, "Hail god of gods!" and sang victory songs.

'Twas good that just then the sev'n sages should come;
At once they were sent to the Mountain-king's home.

But first to where Uma was living they went,
With words seeming fair, but not clear in intent:

DOHA 86

"No heed would you give to what we said, but heeded
"The counsel of Narad, and now
"Lord Siva has burnt and destroyed the god Kama,
"And thus proven false is your vow."

CHAUPAI 90

Smiling she answered, their true thoughts discerning,
"Right well have you spoken, you models of learning;

¶ Another name for Siva.

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"Himself till now subject to change and emotion,
"Lord Siva has slain the Love-god—that's your notion.

"I know him as ever ascetic, austere,
"Unborn, without passion, change, feeling, or fear.

"If I have served Siva, this god, as I knew him;
"My word, thought and deed with devotion giv'n to him;

"Then, sages, once more hear my vow full assured;
"I know he'll fulfil it, my all-gracious Lord.

"When you say that Siva has Passion destroyed
"Your words lack good sense and your judgment is void.

"My friends, the real nature of fire does not change,
"And ice can on no account stay in its range;

"If ever brought near it must surely consume;
"Just so near Lord Siva for Love there's no room."

DOHA 87

At these words the sages rejoiced, and at seeing
So firm faith and such love upwelling;
They bowed with all rev'rence as from her they parted
And came to the Mountain-king's dwelling.

CHAUPAI 91

They told what had happened, the outcome explained;
At news of Love's death was the king deeply pained.

They then Siva's promise to Rati recounted,
The which when he heard, the king's joy quickly mounted.

At heart thus he pondered, "The Lord, he is great,"
And courteously called for the Council of State.

To make wedding plans they the scriptures consulted;
An auspicious day, hour and planet resulted.

The king to the sages the letter entrusted,
And humbly their help in this matter requested.

They went straight to Brahma, the letter gave to him;
He read it; at once love and gladness thrilled thro' him.

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He read it aloud to the gathered immortals;
Their unbounded joy filled all heav'n and its portals;

Around them rained flow'rs, heavenly music was played;
And in ev'ry place festive arrangements were made.

DOHA 88

The gods brought their heavenly chariots out
And adorned them in glad preparation,
While all kinds of auspicious omens were seen,
And nymphs danced and sang in elation.

CHAUPAI 92

His servants for bridal their Lord Siva dressed;
His crown matted locks and a snake his groom's crest;

As ear-rings and armlets, snakes; ash too applied
O'er his body; around him a lion-skin tied;

The moon on his brow; Ganges fair on his head;
Three eyes; and a snake for a god's sacred thread;

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

His throat marked with poison¶; a garland of skulls—
His goodness all dread of such vile dress annuls.

His trident and drum in his hand, he rode splendid
His bull, while in music sweet instruments blended.

The wives of the gods when they saw him, said smiling,
"The world has no bride fit for groom so beguiling."

Then Vishnu, Brahma and each god in his carriage
All joined the procession to go to this marriage.

"Such splendour was ne'er seen before, nor again;
"Yet of such a bridegroom unworthy his train."

DOHA 89

So said the Lord Vishnu with smiles; then he called
Heaven's guardians and gave them command,
"Each one of you bring his companions and march
"In procession, each in his own band.

¶ From drinking a poison draught.

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CHAUPAI 93

"His train is not worthy of such a groom, brothers;
"A fine laughing-stock when we pass before others!"
These orders of Vishnu made all the gods smile;
Each one his own band separated the while.

And Siva smiled inwardly as Vishnu spoke,
But he did not take the command as a joke.
To him Vishnu's words were in love true and fervent,
So Bhringi he sent to call up ev'ry servant.

At Siva's command they all came, as was meet,
And rev'rently bowed at their lord's lotus-feet,
In vehicles strange and in motley array;
At sight of his band Siva laughed right away.

Some had great monstrous heads, others not any;
Some had no hands or feet; others had many;
Some had great eyes, some no eyes, or eyes sunken;
Some big and bloated, some shrivelled and shrunken.

CHHAND 7

Some all emaciate, some fat and satiate;
Neat and clean, dirty and tattered;
With skull-garlands clasped, And with skull-goblets grasped,
Blood quaffing and all blood-bespattered
With heads of rats, dogs, Jackals, asses and hogs,
And other strange forms beyond counting;
Fiend, goblin and witch, Devil, demon and such
Filled the train, weird beyond all recounting.

SORATHA 9

They sang noisy songs and they danced,
This wild demon host, with the strangest contortions;
Their gruesome display was enhanced
By the many cries, fearsome and loud, that they uttered.

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CHAUPAI 94

Right worthy his train now of so fine a groom,
A fanciful show as their way they resume.
The mountain-king meanwhile his plans must commence;
He set up a canopy fine and immense;
He sent to each mountain and hill where'er found,
To each wood and ocean, each river and pond;
From all kinds of places his guests he invited,
Unnumbered, both small and great, no one was slighted.
They dressed in their jewels and garb most resplendent;
They took ev'ry woman and ev'ry attendant;
Then off to the mountain-king's palace they started,
With many a happy song, gay and light-hearted.
The king many beautiful houses erected,
In beautiful sites for the guests he expected.
The city's fair glory to many seemed greater
Than anything made by the All-wise Creator.

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

CHHAND 8

The Lord was outshone, And his power outdone,
By the city's great glory and wonder;
Here gardens, groves, dells, Springs, fountains and wells,
Were such none could tell all their splendour.
Adornments were made, And by each house displayed,
Great arches, flags, streamers and banners;
Men gallant and dutiful; Maids sweet and beautiful,
Won saintly hearts with their manners.

DOHA 90

The city in which the world's mother was born
A fitting description defies,
Where joy and prosperity, wealth and success
Abounding and fresh ever rise.

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CHAUPAI 95

At last when the bridegroom's procession was sighted,
The city more brilliant became and excited.
In fine clothes and carriages, looking their best,
They went out to greet with his party their guest.
The sight of the heav'nly ones gave them great pleasure,
And seeing Lord Vishnu their joy knew no measure.
But when they saw Siva's strange band drawing near,
The horses and people shrank back in their fear.
The elders took courage and stood undismayed;
But the children ran off for their lives, all afraid.
Their parents the reason enquired for their plight;
They answered in stutters and trembling with fright:
"You ask us to speak, but this no one could tell;
"That's no wedding train, but an army of hell;
"The bridegroom, a madman, a huge bull bestrides;
"His ornaments snakes, skulls and ash—naught besides.

CHHAND 9

"Snakes, skulls and ash-smeared, He is awful and weird,
"With hair matted high, body bare;
"With ghosts, devils, witches, And other such wretches
"All round; to go near none would dare.
"Such dread to survive, And come thro' it alive,
"One guarded should be by great merit;
"So kept one maybe, Uma's wedding might see."
The children talked on in this spirit.

DOHA 91

The fathers and mothers knew Siva's companions;
Amused they the young folks enlightened;
They told the whole story, explained what was happ'ning,
And said, "There's no cause to be frightened."

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CHAUPAI 96

Then all who had gone out the groom's train to greet,
Led off every guest to a guest-chamber meet.
And Maina the queen carried out the first rites;
The women sang songs and prepared festive lights;
The queen filled a fine golden bowl with pure water,
And circled with joy round the groom of her daughter.
But when they saw Siva's appearance, in terror,
The women shrank back from the sight of such horror.
They ran off within the house all faint and trembling,
While Siva went back to where guests were assembling.
Queen Maina was troubled and sick at the heart;
She sent for her daughter and took her apart,
She folded the girl to her breast and her fears
She told, as her beautiful eyes filled with tears:
"Why should Brahma give you such beauty and grace,
"And then give a husband so silly and base?

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

CHHAND 10

"Why such beauty disdain? Why give husband insane?
"Oh, why has the Lord this fate given?
"To a thorn bush is doomed, The fair flower that bloomed
"To be one with the gods' tree in heaven.
"From a hilltop we'll dash, Or in fire burn to ash,
"Or we'll drown in the sea—well be dead;
"I'll let house and home go, And our honour also,
"But I'll not live to see you so wed."

DOHA 92

The women were greatly distressed as the queen
Showed her grief and in vain comfort sought;
She wept and lamented and pled for her daughter;
Love, nothing but love filled her thought.

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CHAUPAI 97

"To Narad what harm from poor me could have come,
"That he should make desolate my happy home?

"And why give to Uma such silly instruction,
"That she for a madman endured such infliction?

"'Tis true there's no pleasure or love in his life;
"A monk he with no goods, no house and no wife,

"He shamelessly breaks up the house of another;
"A barren womb knows not the pangs of a mother."

Bhawani felt keenly her mother's deep grief;
Discreetly she answered to bring her relief;

"Let not these thoughts, mother, cause such heart-burning;
"When God determines, there's no over-turning.

"If 'tis my fate that a madman I marry,
"Why should another the blame for this carry?

"None can wipe out things by Providence written;
"You're not to blame, do not be conscience-smitten.

CHHAND 11

"So feel it no shame, To yourself take no blame,
"No time this for tender condoling;
"Wherever I live, What is due fate will give,
"Joy or pain; I've no need for consoling."

As they heard Uma speak, Words so humble and meek,
The women were thoughtful in mind;
Their eyes filled with tears, Hearts were heavy with fears;
They deemed Brahma harsh and unkind.

DOHA 93

Now, just at that time, along with the sev'n sages,
Saint Narad arrived on the scene;
He heard what had happened and went to the palace
To talk with and comfort the queen.

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CHAUPAI 98

He told the whole story and sought to relieve
Their worry; he showed there was no cause to grieve:

"Queen Maina, give heed to my word; it is true,
"Bhawani, World-mother, as daughter have you.

"Divine female pow'r, birth and death never seeing,
"Eternal within half of Lord Siva's being,

"Who all things creates and sustains and destroys;
"Who takes as she will form and frame as her toys.

"As daughter of Daksha to earth once she came,
"Her beauty unrivalled and Sati her name.

"She to the Lord Siva at that time was married;
"Her story since then thro' the whole world has carried.

"She went on a journey with Siva one day;
"It chanced the Lord Rama she saw on the way;

"Ignoring in wilfulness Siva's advice,
"She took Sita's likeness, naught else would suffice.

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

CHHAND 12

"She took Sita's likeness, In this showed her weakness,
"For which Siva wholly forsook her.
"She then with intent, To the king's off'ring went,
"And from earth sacrificial fire took her.

"Now again come to earth, In your house she took birth,
"And her lord to win much she endured.
"As 'twas always, so here, She to Shankar is dear,
"So cease doubting; her hope is secured."

DOHA 94

When Narad had given this word and this comfort,
Their doubting and grieving took wings;
To every house and throughout the whole city
At once spread the news of these things.

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CHAUPAI 99

The king and queen joyfully, with rev'rence meet
Again and again fell at Parvati's feet.
While old folks and children, young men and maids pretty,
All shared in rejoicing throughout the whole city.
In ev'ry place sweet happy singing was heard;
In street and shop festive displays were prepared.
Dishes were made, fine to taste and fine looking,
All by the best rules and arts of good cooking.
Who could give fitting account of the table
Prepared in the goddess's home? None was able.
The gods Vishnu, Brahma and all of the rest,
Were called with the courtesy due to a guest.
Line upon line for the feast they were seated,
While skilled cooks and servers upon the guests waited.
The women near by watched the gods at their feasting,
And gave them for sauce kindly banter and jesting.

CHHAND 13

The women with jests, Mildly rallied the guests;
The gods gave back jests in reply;
They sat late and long, Thus in feasting and song,
And happily let time pass by.
This banquet extended, With cheerfulness blended,
Would baffle a thousand-tongued bard;
With mouth and hands laved, And his *pan* leaf received,
Each left, tho' he time would retard.

DOHA 95

The sages then said that the moment had come,
That the bride and the groom be united.
The king once again for this glad ceremony
The gods to his palace invited.

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CHAUPAI 100

All courtesy due to divine guests was meted;
Each one in his place was right worthily seated.

An altar was raised such as scripture ordains;
The women sang songs in sweet festival strains.

The throne for the groom seemed of beauty divine,
Seemed made by a god—'tis beyond pen of mine.

Saluting the priests, to his seat Siva went,
His thoughts upon Rama, his own lord, intent.

The sages then sent to call Uma, the bride;
She came well-adorned, with her maids at her side.

The gods on this loveliness gazed full of rapture;
The pen of no poet such beauty could capture.

They knew her the true spouse of Siva her Lord,
And deep in their hearts the World-mother adored.

Her story to tell who the world's heart rejoices,
My pow'rs would defy, e'en with myriad voices.

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

CHHAND 14

Not a myriad tongues, Nor a myriad songs,
Could tell all the goddess's glory;
When scriptures refuse, And the heavenly muse,
Could dull Tulsi tell all the story?

This incarnate grace, In the hall sought the place
Where Siva sat canopy-covered;
Eyes downcast and blind, From her shyness, her mind
Like a bee at his lotus-feet hovered.

DOHA 96

The priests then bid Siva and Uma to worship
Ganesh, tho' their own son supernal;
Let none doubt or question this action devout;
Remember the gods are eternal.

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CHAUPAI 101

The rites of the wedding in ev'ry respect
The priests carried thro' as the scriptures direct.

The king took the bride's hand, took sacred grass too;
To Siva gave her whom as goddess he knew.

And when the god took her and thus his troth plighted,
The gods in their hearts were all thrilled and delighted.

The priests read the ritu'l in sacred word given;
"All hail, Shankar! Hail!" cried the gods to high heaven.

Instruments sweet-toned played music orchestral;
On them rained showers of blossoms celestial.

The union of goddess and god in this way
Gave gladness to worlds upon worlds on that day.

Slaves, horses and elephants, cattle and vehicles,
Grain, jewels, clothing and such costly articles,

Gold vessels too—with such goods they were dowered;
Who can recount all the gifts on them showered?

CHHAND 15

This dowry bestowing, The mountain-king bowing,
Lord Siva addressed with hands clasped;
"Since all things are yours, Naught he gives who endow'rs,"
With these words the god's feet he clasped.

The sea of all good, Siva, well understood
The king's heart and spoke to assure him;
Queen Maina too came, In her spirit the same,
And said, falling humbly before him,

DOHA 97

"As dear as my own life is Uma, my daughter;
"Take her, my lord, as your servant;
"Forgive my wrongdoing and grant me in favour
"This pray'r I make humble and fervent."

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CHAUPAI 102

The god gave her counsel and all consolation;
She went to her home in devout adoration.

She there called for Uma, who came in a trice;
Embraced her and gave her a mother's advice:

"Your husband serve faithfully all thro' your life;
"Her husband's her god to a dutiful wife."

Her eyes filled with tears and she wept as she spoke;
Her darling once more to her bosom she took:

"Why did the Creator poor woman create?
"She ne'er dreams of joy while subjection's her fate."

O'ercome by her motherly love and anxiety,
Grief she restrained for the sake of propriety.

Time and again to her dear one returning,
She fell at her feet, in her breast love's flame burning.

Bhawani each woman embraced, old and young;
Ran back to her mother; together they clung.

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

CHHAND 16

Her mother's leave taking, At last from her breaking,
With blessings from all gathered round,
With many a fond look, Her own maids Uma took,
And went to where Siva was found.

Each suppliant heeding, And answ'ring their pleading,
The god with his bride then departed;
On them blossoms were poured, Heav'nly music was heard
From the immortal ones gladsome-hearted.

DOHA 98

The mountain-king came, and these two whom he honoured
And loved, for a while he escorted;
Then Lord Siva bade him return and to many
A plea and persuasion resorted.

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CHAUPAI 103

The king went back quickly and sent out a call
To water and land guests, "Pray come to my hall."

With many a courtesy, blessing and gift,
He bade kind farewell to each one as he left.

Each god to the place returned whence he had come,
And Siva with Uma to Kailas their home.

To tell the love joys is beyond art and letters
Of Uma and Siva divine, earth's begetters.

They lived in Kailas with the hosts they employed,
And there loving passion and pleasure enjoyed.

Amusement and sporting they found ever new,
While months and years passed and the time quickly flew.

At length Kartikeya, the six-headed prince,
Was born, who o'ercame demon Tarak long since.¶

The sacred books all with one voice praise his name;
The whole world knows well of his deeds and his fame.

CHHAND 17

The world knows the name, The birth, valour and fame
And pow'r of the six-headed one;
I too have told briefly, His story that chiefly
I thus might extol Siva's son.

The marriage of Siva, With fair goddess Uma
By man heard or sung, or by maid,
They'll by it be blest, Bliss upon them will rest,
They too shall be happily wed.

DOHA 99

The ways of Lord Siva and Uma his wife
Are to scripture a limitless ocean;
That Tulsi the dullard could tell as is fitting
Their tale is a right foolish notion.

¶ See Chaupai 82 and Doha 80.

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CHAUPAI 104

The saint Bharadvaja was highly elated,
When Siva's great story was to him related.

He wished to hear more, while with tears his eyes filled,
And every hair on his body was thrilled.

By love overcome, his voice stumbled and stuttered,
And then Yajnavalkya his joyful thoughts uttered:

"Oh, blessed indeed is thy birth, saintly hearer,
"To whom Uma's lord than his own life is dearer.

"The man who the fair feet of Siva ne'er deems
"Wholly dear, cannot please Rama even in dreams.

"A true honest love for Lord Siva's the sign
"Of devotion to Rama, mark truly divine.

"No one more than Siva to Rama was loyal,
"Who gave up fair Sati, wife faultless and royal.

"The one in devotion to Rama unswerving,
"Like Siva—who else of his love is deserving?

MARRIAGE OF SIVA AND PARVATI

DOHA 100

"I therefore have first told the story of Siva,
"Well knowing your heart and your soul;
"I know you are faithful, unchanging and loyal;
"Lord Rama to serve your one goal.

CHAUPAI 105

"Your character, spirit and traits I know well;
"Hear now, while the story of Rama I tell.

"To me, saintly one, this day's sacred communion
"Has brought joy unspeakable, blessed our union.

"The lord Rama's ways, ocean vast and unbounded,
"By countless divine tongues could never be sounded.

"Yet this revealed story to tell you I've planned,
"With mind on the lord of all tongues bow in hand.

"The goddess of speech, Sarasvati's a doll;
"The all-knowing lord pulls the strings, controls all,

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"On whom in his kindness he wills to bestow it,
"He dances the doll in his heart, makes a poet.

"To kindly lord Rama my rev'rence I bring,
"And ask for his help as his praises I sing."

No place was more lovely than mountain Kailas,
Where Siva and Uma were pleased life to pass.

DOHA 101

There hermits, ascetics, saints perfect and sages,
Gods, angels and all souls devoted,
Together dwelt happily, serving Lord Siva,
In whom all our blessing is rooted.

CHAUPAI 106

Without to lords Vishnu and Siva love giving,
No man in that mountain could e'er dream of living.

On top of the mount stood a great banyan tree,
At all seasons fresh and delightful to see.

Here winds were refreshing and cool was its shade;
Here Siva oft rested, the scriptures have said.

He went there one morning to rest at his leisure;
The sight of the tree gave his heart untold pleasure.

He spread 'neath the tree his soft tiger-skin mat,
And there at his ease the All-Gracious One sat;

His body fair-hued, jasmine like in its charms;
In hermit's cloth clad; long and graceful his arms;

Like fresh lotus blooms, or like new dawn his feet,
Their nails rays of light that our darkness defeat;

With serpents adorned and all covered with ashes;
Face lit with such light as the full moon abashes.

DOHA 102

Ganges from his head sprang; his crown was hair twisted;
His eyes, like the lotus, full-orbed;
Blue throated; the bright crescent moon on his forehead—
There sat glory's storehouse absorbed.

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CHAUPAI 107

There sat Kama's foe who made passion to cease,
As tho' he embodied the essence of peace.

This moment to mother Bhawani seemed fitting;
She came with her plea to where Siva was sitting.

Beloved and loving, he gave her due honour,
A seat on his left, while his eyes rested on her.

She sat down beside him, while gladness thrilled thro' her,
And thoughts of her former birth quickly came to her.

She knew that he loved her still; yea, more than ever
And asked in sweet tones and with smiles for his favour.

She wished from her husband that story to hear,
Well-known to the world, source of all good and cheer.

"Purari, my lord," she said, "lord of all things,
"Your glory the universe knows, your praise sings;

"All men, gods and animals, great ones and lowly,
"Things living and lifeless, adore your feet holy.

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

DOHA 103

"The lord of all pow'r and all knowledge art thou,
"The source of all virtues and arts,
"The fountain of wisdom, devotion and temp'rance,
"Well called Tree of Life to all hearts.

CHAUPAI 108

"O blissful one, if I your favour have gained,
"If I as your slave have approval obtained,

"Oh then, from my mind let my darkness be rolled,
"The rich wondrous story of Rama unfold.

"The one who lives under the paradise-tree,
"Of suff'ring and poverty how much knows he?

"O moon-crested one, think upon this, I pray,
And let my mind's confusion be driven away.

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"The wise, for life's meaning and aim ever questing,
"Say Rama is Brahma Supreme, Everlasting.

"Gods wise and sweet-tongued, sacred books and profane,
"Of Rama all tell and his praises maintain.

"And you, even you, O destroyer of Kama,
"Are ever repeating the name of Lord Rama.

"Is this Avadh's prince, the king's son, or some being
"Unborn and of ways beyond telling and seeing?

DOHA 104

"How be God Supreme if king's son and by loss
"Of his wife so o'erwhelmed and aghast?
"My mind is by myst'ry and error confused
"When his glory and ways I contrast.

CHAUPAI 109

"Of the Passionless One, Omnipresent, Supreme,
"Pray tell me, my lord, tho' so foolish I seem.

"I am blind; be not angry, nor think me perverse,
"But give me your help, my confusion disperse.

"To me Rama's greatness that day was revealed
"In the wood, but my lips by my terror were sealed.

"My mind was dark too, my discretion impeded;
"I've had my deserts; how I wish I had heeded.

"Yet still in my mind there is question and doubt;
"Be gracious, give heed to my prayer; cast it out.

"I know you instructed me well once before;
"My lord, be not angry, I pray, on that score.

"I'm not now so wilfully blind, fascinated;
"I love Rama's story, would hear it related.

"Then sing me the song of his life and renown,
"O Lord of all lords, of all kingdoms the crown.

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DOHA 105

"With hands clasped before you in worship and prayer,
"At your feet humbly taking my station,
"I ask for the story of Rama, the essence
"Of wisdom and all revelation.

CHAUPAI 110

"No rights has a woman to such, 'tis decreed;
"But I am your servant in thought, word and deed.

"The saints do not keep their truths secret and closed
"From those who in suff'ring to learn are disposed.

"In utter distress, King of Heav'n, I beseech you;
"Tell me Rama's story; Oh, let my pray'r reach you.

"First answer the question that deep thought must waken,
"Why infinite God finite body has taken.

"Of incarnate Rama then tell me the truth,
"His life as a child and as generous youth.

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

"Then tell how as wife Janak's daughter he took,
"And how by foul wrong he the kingdom forsook;

"His deeds in the jungle, astounding but true;
"How Ravan the dread he defeated and slew;

"His life and his ways when he came to the throne—
"Pray tell me the whole, O thou amiable one.

DOHA 106

"Of this crown of King Raghu's line tell all the might
"And the end of his wonderful hist'ry,
"When he with his subjects returned whence he came;
"Open up, gracious one, all this myst'ry.

CHAUPAI 111

"Then tell me, my lord, those great truths and their meaning
"Which wise men and good are with joy always gleaning.

"Of knowledge and wisdom, firm faith, self-denial,
"Tell all in full detail; my mind put to trial,

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"Of all Rama's secrets I fain would be learning,
"So tell me, my lord, thou of clearest discerning.

"And what I've forgotten to ask in my blindness,
"Pray keep that not hid, tell it also in kindness.

"Of th' whole universe scriptures say you are teacher;
"Without you what light is there for a mere creature."

Siva was pleased as with naught of duplicity,
Uma thus questioned in humble simplicity.

All Rama's story at once came before him,
His eyes filled with tears of joy, love's thrill went o'er him.

Bright visions of Rama came clearly defined,
Which brought untold limitless joy to his mind.

DOHA 107

For two hours in deep contemplation he sat;
Then once more his senses revised;
And then he began to recount Rama's story
From which all his bliss was derived.

CHAUPAI 112

"The false seems the true, as a snake seems the rope;
"Without knowing Rama, of light there's no hope.

"But knowing him drives away error's illusion,
"As waking from sleep dispels dreams and confusion.

"That Rama in form of a child I salute,
"Repeating whose name brings us all blissful fruit.

"Be kind, thou abode of good, foe of all ill,
"Who once played in Dasrath's court; be gracious still."

Thus homage to Rama the great Siva owned,
Then started the tale in a voice honey-toned.

"O mountain-king's daughter, O woman thrice blest,
"Unequalled as helper of all those distrest;

"For Lord Rama's story you ask with its teaching,
"Which Ganges-like cleanses, earth's utmost bounds reaching.

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"In ardent devotion to Rama you speak;
"In making your plea 'tis the world's good you seek.

DOHA 108

"O mountain princess, well I know that your mind
"Ne'er could harbour, by Lord Rama's blessing,
"A shadow of grief, error, doubt, or illusion,
"Or any such thing soul-distressing.

CHAUPAI 113

"But you in assurance these doubts have presented,
"That men as they hear may be blest and contented.

"The ears that to Lord Rama's life have not hearkened
"Are just like a serpent's hole, dirty and darkened;

"The eyes that on this holy vision ne'er dwell
"Are like the false eyes on a fine peacock's tail;

"The head that ne'er bows at my lord's feet divine
"Is like a wild gourd, bitter tho' looking fine;

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

"The heart that to God its devotion ne'er gives
"Is naught but a corpse, tho' in seeming it lives;

"The tongue that its praise to Lord Rama ne'er brings
"Is like a frog's tongue, simply croaks when it sings;

"The heart is a thunderbolt, heavy and hard,
"That does not rejoice when his doings are heard.

"List Girija, Lord Rama's deeds I'll relate,
"To demons delusion, to gods a delight.

DOHA 109

"The heavenly cow is this story of Rama;
"Who serves her finds blessing untold;
"Like heav'n is the gath'ring of saints where 'tis heard
"And its heavenly vistas unfold.

CHAUPAI 114

"This story resembles the clapping of hands;
"Like birds from the fields all our doubts it disbands.

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"This axe cuts this Evil Age down like a tree,
"So rev'rently list to my story and me.

"Divine scriptures sing Rama's name, birth and days,
"His numberless virtues, his deeds and his ways.

"As Rama himself is the Lord without end,
"So his virtues and fame in tales numberless blend.

"Yet, knowing your love, as my mind sees and feels it,
"I'll tell you his story as scripture reveals it.

"So nat'ral and simple the questions you're raising;
"The saints delight in them; to me they are pleasing.

"But one thing you said must displeasure evoke,
"Altho' you in error and ignorance spoke;

"You ask, He whom scriptures and saints contemplate,
"Unknown Other is he, or the one incarnate?

DOHA 110

"To such things 'tis base minds that give ear and tongue
"By demon delusion ensnared,
"Blasphemers and far from God, seeing no diff'rence
"When falsehood and truth are compared.

CHAUPAI 115

"Unfortunate, ignorant, blind in their error,
"A thick sensu'l film overspreads their mind's mirror;

"Lewd, treacherous, wilful against all restraints,
"They can't even dream of the comp'ny of saints.

"'Tis these with no knowledge of welfare or hurt,
"Who scriptural doctrines and teachings pervert.

"With lenses impure, or bereft of their eyes,
"For such Rama's vision can never arise.

"They cannot distinguish between right and wrong;
"They jibber and jabber away all day long.

"Misled by divine error, aimless they wander;
"To them 'tis no sin evil vain words to squander.

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"They're sensual, devilish, worldly and mad;
"From such men no sensible speech can be had.
"Whatever they do is in wild, drunken craving;
"No heed should be paid to their folly and raving.

SORATHA 10

"On such thoughts now let your mind fasten,
"Your doubts put away, Rama's feet humbly worship;
"Give ear, mountain princess, and listen
"To words that like sunlight dispel error's darkness.

CHAUPAI 116

"'Twixt finite and infinite there is no difference,
"So say all books and men worthy of deference.
"He the Ineffable, Infinite, Holy,
"Finite becomes for his love of the lowly.

"Must finite and infinite always be disparate?
"Can snow and ice be from water made separate?
"Could he be subject to error whose name
"Dispels error's night, who is ever the same?

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

"The Lord of Day, Rama, All Bliss, Knowledge, Truth,
"Illusion's night never can touch him, forsooth.

"The lord divine he, very light, in his presence
"No dawn understanding need have, 'tis his essence.

"All self-conceit, ignorance, learning, joy, grief,
"Mark beings whose life here is bounded and brief.

"The world knows that Rama is Brahma sublime,
"All bliss, all-pervading, beyond thought and time.

DOHA 111

"The Spirit Supreme, fount of light, of all beings
"Created the Lord, now revealed;
"The jewel of Raghu's line, my lord," (thus Siva
In reverent faith Rama hailed.)

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CHAUPAI 117

"His own folly's hid from one darkened and dull;
"In God he sees error, the ignorant fool;

"Like simple folks who, when clouds cover the sun,
"Say darkness and night come, the sun's set and gone;

"Like children who cover their eyes with their fingers,
"With whom the illusion of two moons then lingers.

"No more than by smoke and dust heav'n is affected,
"Is sensu'l illusion in Rama detected.

"Like all souls and gods, senses too and their objects
"Are all in their measure intelligent subjects.

"'Tis Rama eternal who everything lightens;
"'Tis he who as ruler fair Avadh now brightens.

"Whatever is lightened its light gets from him,
"Source of truth, as of all that's illusive and dim.

"By his truth illusive material perception
"Appears to be true, thus it leads to deception.

DOHA 112

"As water's mirage in the sun's rays appears,
"And as silver appears in the shell,
"Altho' it is false, yet as long as it lasts,
"Nothing can the illusion dispel.

CHAUPAI 118

"Tho' full of illusion and suff'ring perforce,
"The whole world rests back upon God as its source;

"As when a man dreams someone cuts off his head,
"And suffers till sleeping and dreaming have fled.

"My Uma, the one by whose grace error flies
"Is Rama of Raghu's line, kindly and wise.

"His end and beginning none ever could know;
"His praise as they find him the scriptures all show.

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"He hears without ears, without feet too he moves;
"Without hands, his pow'r in deeds varied he proves;
"No mouth, yet in all flavours pleasure he takes;
"Without tongue or voice eloquently he speaks;
"He sees without eyes; without body he touches;
"Without any nose, ev'ry scent too he catches.
"His deeds and his ways none can fitly describe;
"To him as is due none can glory ascribe.

DOHA 113

"He whom all the scriptures and sages proclaim,
"And saints contemplate without ceasing;
"This lord is now Koshala's king, son of Dasrath,
"The faithful from all ill releasing.

CHAUPAI 119

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

"The one by the virtue of whose name the soul
"That dies in Benares forever is whole,
"Is Rama; the lord of all lifeless and living;
"My lord, ev'ry heart's inmost secrets perceiving.
"He whose name the most helpless sinner employs
"And evils in former births gathered destroys;
"The one by whose mem'ry all souls can forever
"The sea of life cross, as cows o'er shallow river;
"He, Uma, is Rama, the Spirit Supreme.
"To charge him with error was folly extreme.
"The heart that should once entertain such a doubt
"Would all fruit of knowledge and temp'rance wipe out."
At Siva's enlightening words all her questions
Were gone, with all vain arguments and suggestions.
Her love and her faith in Lord Rama grew stronger;
Impossible things troubled Uma no longer.

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DOHA 114

Again and again at her lord's lotus feet
She bowed, and with lotus hands clasped
And heart full of love, she began to express
Her own thoughts, and show his she had grasped.

CHAUPAI 120

"Illusion has gone like dread feverish heat,
"Dispelled by your voice like cool moon rays and sweet.

"Your goodness my every doubt has removed;
"The nature I know of the Rama I've loved.

"My grief and perplexity now, lord, have flown;
"I am wholly at peace, Rama's favour I own.

"Now count me your humble and most willing slave,
"Altho' as dull woman I speak and behave.

"My lord, if to me you are kindly disposed,
"Pray answer for me the first question I posed;

"If Rama is Brahma, the Spirit Immortal,
"Above all, yet found within ev'ry heart's portal,

"Why comes he to earth? Why take human form here?
"My all-glorious lord, make this mystery clear."

Thus Uma with modesty spoke and sincerely,
And showed she the story of Rama loved dearly.

DOHA 115

Then Shankar rejoiced, the destroyer of Kama,
By nature the gen'rous and good;
He praised Uma greatly and showed by his answer
He fully her mind understood.

SORATHA 11

"Give heed," he said, "while I recount
"The Lake of Lord Rama's Deeds, pure blessed story;
"This is the authentic account,
"Bhusundi the crow gave Garur, king of vultures.

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"Their courteous, clear conversation
"I'll give you in full, tell it just as it happened;
"I'll tell the divine incarnation
"And doings of Rama, all faultless and noble.

"Unbounded his name and his praises,
"His hist'ry and forms infinite and unnumbered;
"The things my mind sees and appraises
"I'll tell you now, Uma; with reverence listen.

CHAUPAI 121

"Know first, mountain maid, that the ways of the Lord
"Are wondrous and varied, as scriptures record.

"Why God becomes incarnate, tho' 'tis a fact,
"Can never be told in words full and exact.

"I know well that Rama is far beyond reach
"Of argument, intellect, knowledge and speech.

"And yet as I'm able I'll give you my thought,
"As sages and saints and the scriptures have sought.

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

"My beautiful one, I'll explain as I can
"Why he, the Supreme, takes the form of a man.

"Whenever religion and goodness are waning,
"When devilish proud evil power is gaining,

"Whenever the earth, Brahmans, cows and the gods
"Are threatened with wrong and face tyrannous odds,

"'Tis then he some bodily form must assume,
"The godly to save and all evil consume.

DOHA 116

"The gods he establishes, demons destroys,
"And the bridge of the scriptures restores;
"That's why he takes birth; thus his glory and grace
"Once again o'er the whole earth he pours.

CHAUPAI 122

"The saints his praise singing o'erpass all life's fears;
"In grace for their sakes he man's life and lot shares.

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"The causes of Rama's birth, many and vari'us,
"Are wondrous in all such occasions precari'us.

"I'll tell you of some births and happenings previ'us;
"Give careful attention to tales strange and devi'us."

Lord Vishnu had two servants guarding his quarters,
Vijaya and Jaya by name, belov'd porters.

It happened these brothers, by Brahman's dread curse,
Were both born as demons—What fate could be worse?

Hiranya-kashipu, Hiranyaksha named,
And Indra's pride low'ring became both world-famed.

Great conq'rors in war, with their dread earth was filled,
Till Vishnu in form of a wild boar one killed.

As lion-like man born the other he slew;
The fame of his friend Prahalad has spread too.

DOHA 117

As demons again they were born and became
Conq'ring heroes far famed, feared and glori'us,
The dread ruthless Ravan and Kumbhakaran,
Who in war o'er the gods were victori'us

CHAUPAI 123

Both killed by the hand of the Lord, yet not freed
From the curse, for three births had to both been decreed.

Once more for the sake of these two, and for love
Of the faithful, the Lord came to earth from above.

His parents, the former Kashyap and Aditi,
Were Dasrath and Kausalya of Avadh city.

In one age in this form the Lord took his birth
And cleansed by his deeds filth from off the whole earth.

The gods once again were in dire distress seen;
Jalandhar in battle their victor had been;

Then Siva engaged in this warfare terrific,
But could not o'ercome this great demon horrific;

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The cause was the virtue of Jalandhar's wife,
Which frustrated Siva and saved her lord's life.

DOHA 118

Vishnu by a trick made her swerve from her faith,
The gods thus were given the vict'ry;
But Jalandhar's wife cursed the Lord in her anger,
When she came to know of his trick'ry.

CHAUPAI 124

Lord Vishnu accepted her curse and its pow'r;
He's playful in kindness, was so in that hour.

Jalandhar as Ravan by Rama was slain,
And thus in this third birth could freedom obtain.

Of one birth this then was the cause and the reason;
'Twas thus Rama took human form at that season.

Of each incarnation there's some special fable
Which, heard from the saints, poets tell as they're able.

CONVERSATION OF SIVA AND PARVATI

On Vishnu by Narad a curse once was placed;
In one age from this incarnation is traced.

This last word gave Uma o'erwhelming surprise,
For Vishnu was loved by saint Narad the wise.

She asked, "To this curse why was Vishnu submitted?
"What wrong had he done? 'Gainst whom evil committed?

"'Tis strange if strong passion a saint can defeat;
"Pray tell me, my lord; the whole story repeat."

DOHA 119

The Lord Siva smiled as he heard Uma's words,
"The wise are not fools," he replied,
"But what Rama does, as he plans and at once,
"Comes to pass and must ever abide."

SORATHA 14

(Devoutly, while Rama I laud,
Give ear, Bharadvaja, said saint Yajnavalkya.

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I, Tulsi, unyielding to fraud
Or pride, also worship that same strong deliv'rer.)

CHAUPAI 125

Among the snow mountains a cave may be found,
The Ganges near by, quiet peace all around.

Delighted to see it was Narad the sage,
A cell where in worship he thought to engage.

He saw wondrous rocks and streams, forests and glades;
His heart with divine love was warmed by these aids.

His thoughts set on Vishnu, King Daksha's curse failed,¶
With breath withdrawn, soon thoughtful stillness prevailed.

Proud Indra, on seeing his trance, was alarmed;
So Kama he called, god with Love's arrows armed.

To Narad this god and his helpers he sent;
To serve Indra's need Kama joyfully went.

The reason for Indra's concern was the fear
That Narad his power and place might acquire.

Those greedily sensu'l and unsatisfied,
Like crows, are of all other people afraid.

DOHA 120

They're like a base dog who, on seeing a tiger,
Runs off with his dry little bone;
He fears that the tiger will snatch it away—
Such was Indra unshamed on his throne.

CHAUPAI 126

The god and his helpers drew near the saint's cave;
By magic, illusion of springtime he gave.

In all sorts of trees many-hued flowers bloomed;
The birds sang their spring songs and busy bees hummed;

¶ The curse was that he never would be able to stay quietly anywhere.

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Around blew delightful, refreshing cool breezes,
A weapon of Love by which passion increases;

While Rambha and other sweet heav'nly nymphs played,
And all artful wiles of young passion displayed;

They sang in new measures and sweet tones well blended;
In intricate dances, hands waving, they wended.

The god of love watched as his helpers disported,
And gladly to all his devices resorted.

The saint was unmoved despite all this dissembling;
Then Kama for fear of himself began trembling.

There's none can come near, or can do the least harm,
To one who is guarded by Vishnu's strong arm.

DOHA 121

In trembling and fear Kama owned with his helpers
Their effort's defeat and futility;
He ran to the saint, there he fell at his feet
And asked pardon in deepest humility.

THE FOLLY OF SAINT NARAD

CHAUPAI 127

No anger could Narad 'gainst anyone hold;
He answered in love and thus Kama consoled.

The god of love humbly at Narad's command,
Retired from the scene of defeat with his band.

Before Indra's court he the story related,
How Narad's fine virtue had Love's wiles defeated.

They all wondered greatly; the saint they applauded
And worshipping Vishnu his greatness they lauded.

To Siva came Narad himself in proud fashion,
And big with conceit at his conquest of Passion.

He told how defeat came to Kama's endeavour;
The god gave him counsel, as loving as ever:

"O saintly one, never on any pretence
"To Lord Vishnu tell as to me these events;

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"Tho' time may seem ripe and tho' seemingly bidden,
"Pray keep this forever a secret and hidden."

DOHA 122

The saint was not pleased with Lord Siva's advice;
He turned away utterly heedless.
(Now see what transpired, Bharadvaja; to tell you
God's will prevails always is needless.

CHAUPAI 128

What Lord Rama wills and decrees must prevail;
Him none can frustrate; he who tries it must fail.)

On Narad Lord Siva's words made no impression;
He went straight to Brahma's court; such his obsession,

That, while there some days stayed this saint among saints,
His pride and conceit grew beyond all restraints.

One day he sang songs as he played his sweet lute;
To Lord Vishnu's name he gave rev'rent salute.

Thus singing, he came to the milky sea's shore,
Where dwells the Lord Vishnu whom scriptures adore.

The lord was delighted and rose up to greet him;
Himself at his side then did lovingly seat him.

The lord of all creatures said, showing a smile,
"This kindness comes after a very long while."

The saint then, unmindful of Lord Siva's warning,
Told Kama's whole story, restraint proudly scorning.

So strong is his power, beyond all conception,
That none can resist the Lord Rama's deception.

DOHA 123

Lord Vishnu then answered the saint in sweet tones,
But with countenance solemn and seri'us:
"Your mem'ry all passion and pride will destroy."
Were his words with their meaning mysteri'us.

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CHAUPAI 139

"Blind passion that soul fascinates and thus harms
"That, wisdom's restraint lacking, yields to its charms.

"No trouble could Passion to one like you cause,
"So temp'rate and steadfast in chastity's laws."

But arrogant still was the saint in replying,
"That lot falls to him, Lord; on your grace relying."

The Gracious One saw thro' the saint's soul, and wondered;
"A huge tree of pride has sprung up there," he pondered,

"At once I must act; it must soon be uprooted;
"I'm pledged to the good of my servants devoted.

"For sake of his good and to play my own game,
"Some plan I'll devise and the saint thus reclaim."

Then Narad, more obstinate still and proud-hearted,
Bowed low at the feet of the god and departed.

Lord Vishnu his pow'rs of illusion revived.
See now what a marvellous thing he contrived.

THE FOLLY OF SAINT NARAD

DOHA 124

Right on the saint's road there appeared a dream city,
It spread o'er a full hundred leagues;
'Twas greater and finer than Vishnu's abode
And was built by his magic intrigues.

CHAUPAI 130

With such handsome women and men the place teemed,
That Kama and Rati embodied they seemed.

King Silnidhi reigned there; unnumbered his forces;
He owned countless elephants, chariots and horses.

In him centered virtue, fame, beauty and power;
The rival of hundreds of Indras his dower.

One daughter he had, Vishvamohini her name;
Her beauty would put even Lakshmi to shame.

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By Lord Vishnu's magic the maid was so exquisite,
None to describe her charms had the skill requisite.
Unnumbered princes and kings there had thronged;
To wed the princess, by her own choice, they longed.
As part of his game Vishnu brought Narad there;
The saint asked the folks what was happ'ning and where.
He went to the palace when told and directed;
The king gave him welcome as one he respected.

DOHA 125

The princess was called; the king showed her to Narad,
And asked him to carefully study
The maiden and frankly to point out the virtues
And faults of her—soul, mind and body.

CHAUPAI 131

The saint was o'ercome by her beauty amazing;
His vows he ignored, long he sat at her gazing.
Himself he forgot; watched her like one possessed,
With pleasure so great it could not be expressed:
"A bride she for one who's immortal divine,
"Whose glories unconquered o'er battle-fields shine;
"One whom all creation obedi'ntly serves,
"Such Silnidhi's daughter as husband deserves."
The marks of her future in mind the saint fixed;
To talk with the king of her making pretext.
He said that the maid would be happy and fortunate;
Then left with mind much disturbed and importunate.
"I must think out and devise such a plan,"
Said he, "that she'll marry me, no other man;
"No time this for pray'r, self-denial and rigour;
"To make her mine give me, O God, light and vigour.

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DOHA 126

"I need at this time gallant air, handsome features,
"Fine presence and sweet pleasing voice;
"That once she has seen me, the maid may be won
"And may give me the garland of choice.

CHAUPAI 132

"From Vishnu I'd ask handsome looks and becoming,
"But much time must lose in my going and coming.

"Yet where can I turn just now—Brother! O brother?
"He is my one helper, I know of no other."

At once he expressed his wish, earnestly praying;
In answer Vishnu appeared, still his game playing.

The saint's eyes were lightened by sight of this vision;
He joyfully thought, "For my need here's provision."

His story he told with plea urgent and needy:
"My gracious lord, grant help availing and speedy.

"Divine charm and grace give me, like to your own;
"There's no way to win her, but by this alone.

THE FOLLY OF SAINT NARAD

"Your servant am I, lord; my welfare secure
"By means that will bring success swiftly and sure."

On seeing to what his delusion had led,
The gracious lord inwardly smiled as he said:

DOHA 127

"Hear me, saintly Narad, your welfare I seek;
"Your good I desire, nothing else;
"Be sure this one thing; and this only I'll do,
"And that words of mine never prove false.

CHAUPAI 133

"A sick man may ask for what harms and may want it,
"But no true physician will heed him and grant it;

"And likewise, O saint, for your good I've prepared."
With these words, the lord once again disappeared.

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The saint was so mad in his folly delusive,
He failed to perceive Vishnu's meaning elusive.

At once to the well-filled arena he goes,
The place where the princess her husband will choose.

There line upon line sat the kings with their banners,
In gorge'us array and with each his retainers.

The saint took his place, thinking thus in his glee,
"My beauty is such that she'll choose none but me."

But Vishnu in kindness, with no thought invidi'us,
Had made him unspeakably ugly and hide'us.

The people knew Narad and deference paid him;
But knew naught of all the things that had waylaid him.

DOHA 128

Two servants of Siva were there at the time,
Who knew what had just then transpired;
Great jokers were they; here and there in the gath'ring
They wandered, as Brahmans attired.

CHAUPAI 134

In that very group, just where Narad was seated
In thoughts of his handsomeness proud and conceited,

Close by him those servants of Siva likewise
Took their seats, all unknown in their Brahman disguise.

Just where he could hear them, they started their mocking,
"From Vishnu fine looks he's received," they said, joking;

"As soon as she sees him, he'll charm the princess;
"She will choose him, believing him Vishnu, no less."

They quietly laughed at the saint, who—a puppet
Bewitched—lay in other hands; no one could stop it.

Bewildered, he understood none of their chaffing,
Altho' he could hear all their chatt'ring and laughing.

No other sensed anything secret or strange,
Except the princess; she—aware of the change—

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Turned from his revolting ape-face in disgust,
As hopefully Narad himself forward thrust.

DOHA 129

The maid like a swan walked around the arena,
Her lovely companions about her;
The garland of choice in her lotus-like hands
She held as she looked on each suitor.

CHAUPAI 135

But where Narad sat and where swelling pride beckoned,
She turned not her gaze; No! not e'en for a second.

He fussed and he twisted and changed his position;
His tormentors laughed when they saw his condition.

As one of the kings Vishnu sat in the crowd;
With joy the maid on him the garland bestowed.

To Lakshmi's abode as his bride the Lord brought her;
Despondent the kings went away who had sought her.

THE FOLLY OF SAINT NARAD

The saint sat in hopelessness maddened and tossed,
Like one who a priceless rich jewel has lost.

The servants of Siva said laughingly, "Go you,
"Friend Narad, and see what a mirror will show you."

Then, having said that much, they ran off in terror;
The saint took a look in the lake as a mirror.

The sight that he saw there enraged and demented him;
Bitterly cursed he the two who tormented him:

DOHA 130

"Both of you—Go, become demons of darkness;
"You've played the foul hypocrite hooligan;
"This be the fruit of your mocking; nor dare you
"To make of a saint such a fool again."

CHAUPAI 136

He saw once again in the water his face
Restored as before; but that brought him no peace.

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His mind hot with rage and lips quivering constantly,
Straight to meet Vishnu away he went instantly.

Thought he, "I'll curse him, or kill myself off;
"Because of him, at me the whole world will scoff."

Just then, over demons victori'us, Vishnu,
With Lakshmi and that fair princess came in view.

He said in a loving voice, quiet and mild:
"Where go you, my friend, so distracted and wild?"

At these words the rage of the saint was inflamed;
He lost all discretion, as Vishnu he blamed:

"To frustrate another's success is your policy;
"Well the world knows of your falsehood and jealousy.

"Siva you maddened by churning the ocean;
"Sent gods to make him drink the poisonous potion."

DOHA 131

Giving poison to Siva, to demons drink, Lakshmi
You took and the bright gem of gems;
"You've always been treacherous, wayward and selfish
"In all of your doings and aims.

CHAUPAI 137

"Always self-willed, under no one's authority,
"Done as you like in your superiority!

"Evil exalting, good crushing and scorning;
"Nothing you know of rejoicing or mourning.

"Others you're always enticing and tempting,
"Yourself from all worry and trouble exempting.

"No good deeds or ill ever seem to concern you,
"And no one could ever restrain you or turn you.

"You now must abide in the structure you've built;
"The fruits you'll receive of your own deeds and guilt.

"This then is the fate by my curse you've secured;
"Be born in the form by which I was allured.

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"You made me look monkey-like for your own ends;
"So monkeys shall be your own helpers and friends.
"And as you have wronged me and blasted my life,
"So you shall be grief-struck by loss of your wife."

DOHA 132

The Lord bowed his head to the curse of the saint,
That the pray'rs of the gods might be answered;
And then in his kindness the pow'r he withdrew
Of the plan of illusion he'd sponsored.

CHAUPAI 138

When ev'ry delusion and dream was dispelled,
Nor Lakshmi, nor princess again were beheld,
At Vishnu's feet Narad fell down all a-tremble,
His feet who gives heed to the pray'rs of the humble:
"Good Lord, may my curse be averted," he pled;
"Your wish is my will," the All-Gracious One said.

THE FOLLY OF SAINT NARAD

"My lord," replied Narad, "harsh words I have spoken;
"Pray, how may my sin's guilt and power be broken ?"
"A hundred times say Siva's name and believe,"
Said Vishnu, "Your soul 'twill that moment relieve.
"None dearer than Siva could be to me ever;
"To this faith hold fast, let it go from you never.
"The one on whom Siva no grace will bestow.
"Can never find love for me, none ever show.
"Delusion has left you; my words weigh and ponder;
"Let this faith stay with you wherever you wander."

DOHA 133

The Lord thus instructed and re-assured Narad,
And then himself faded from sight;
While Narad, extolling the Lord Rama's fame,
Sought the heavenly realm of true light.

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CHAUPAI 139

Those servants of Siva fell in with the saint,
As he free from pride on his way joyful went;

They trembled in fear as they nearer approached,
Then low at his feet their petition they broached:

"Siva's servants are we, Brahmans but by pretence;
"The fruits we receive of our foolish offence.

"Be gracious, O saint, from your curse let us hide."
Then Narad, the kindly and gracious, replied:

"You both must be demons of night; but be glorious,
"Famed for your prowess, o'er many victorious;

"Then when you've conquered the world, for its sake
"Lord Vishnu again human body will take.

"In battle you'll die at his hand on the earth,
"And freedom forever you'll win from all birth."

They left him in rev'rence for such saintly strength,
And both became demons of darkness at length.

DOHA 134

Lord Vishnu for this reason took human form
In one age, and thus those days brightened;
To gods and to saints he brought joyous relief,
And the world's heavy burden he lightened.

CHAUPAI 140

Many the births thus of Vishnu's beneficence,
All marked by beauty and blessed munificence.

Time after time is he thus manifested;
By virtue and grace is his goodness attested.

His story is given in every age
In choice strains and measures by saint and by sage.

We thus have these varied and wonderful hist'ries,
Which wise men hear gladly untroubled by myst'ries.

Eternal is Vishnu, eternal his story;
All scriptures, all saints tell his marvellous glory.

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So wondrous are Rama's ways known to the sages,
All could not be told in a myriad ages.

The tale of his illusive pow'r I've declared
To show how the wisest and best are ensnared.

He's sportive; but those who pray humbly he blesses;
He's near to his servants and heals their distresses.

SORATHA 15

No god, man, or saint but must feel
At times all the pow'r of the false and illusive;
Then praise him, Lord of the Unreal,
The thought of his ways in your heart ever cherish.

CHAUPAI 141

"Now, maid of the mountains, without any pause,
"A wondrous new story I'll tell of the cause

"Why Brahma unborn, the unrivalled controller
"Of all, infinite, became Kosala's ruler.

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

"The lord who was wand'ring the forest for years
"With his brother, both dressed as devoted *fakirs,*

"Whose beauty and worth, by which many are gladdened,
"So stirred you that in Sati's form you were maddened;

"(The thought of which causes you still loss of ease)
"He whose gracious ways heal illusion's disease,

"That lord's sportive deeds in his life incarnate,
"As far as I know them, I'll fully relate."

These words of Lord Siva in kindliest voice
Made modest, affectionate Uma rejoice.

The god then continued his theme to make plain
Why Vishnu assumed incarnation again.

DOHA 135

(And now, Bharadvaja, said Saint Yajnavalkya,
Give heed, while I tell as he told it,
The story of Rama that cleanses sin's stains
And gives bliss as men hear and unfold it.)

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CHAUPAI 142

Manu heavenborn, and Shatrupa first woman,
His wife, were the parents of all that is human.

The scriptures record to this day their rare beauty,
Devoted to God, to each other, and duty.

King Uttanapada they had as their son,
Whose firstborn was Dhruva, devout faithful one.

At last as his youngest was Priyabrat born,
Whose name and whose fame ancient scriptures adorn.

Manu had a daughter, Devhuti by name,
Who wife of the saintly Kardama became.

To her the Supreme One, the Lord, in his grace
Gave as son kindly Kapila, gem of our race,

Who gave us the great Sankhya system and teaching,
Whose grasp of all foundation truth is far reaching.

With kingdom and family thus many days,
God's will followed Manu in all of his ways.

SORATHA 16

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

He could not attain the condition
Of total detachment while living at home;
In old age he said in contrition,
"Life's gone, true devotion I have not attained."

CHAUPAI 143

His son he made king; brought his reign to conclusion;
Then he and his wife went to live in seclusion.

They thought of Naimish, far-famed pilgrimage centre,
So pure that it gives bliss to all those who enter.

There sages and saints live in brotherly union;
The king went there gladly to share this communion.

As he and his wife took their pilgrim way steadily,
Wisdom and Faith seemed to show themselves bodily.

Reaching the pure river Gomati's banks,
They bathed in its waters and gave grateful thanks.

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To greet them came wise men and good from all quarters,
Who knew them as truth's loyal kingly supporters.

To all of the sacred and beautiful places
The saintly ones took them with courtesy's graces.

In hermit's garb clad, bodies steadily wasting,
They lived, joys of scripture and fellowship tasting.

DOHA 136

In thoughtful devotion they constantly uttered
The holiest twelve-lettered charm,
Their minds wholly set on the Lord's lotus feet
With a love that was earnest and warm.

CHAUPAI 144

On Brahma—Truth, Knowledge and Bliss—meditating,
They passed their days, naught but leaves, roots and fruits eating.

For God's sake they then sought to live more austerely,
Ate no food at all, but on water lived merely.

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

But one thing they asked for, but one thing they wanted:
"May God's wondrous vision to our sight be granted.

"The One without passions, parts, end, or beginning,
"Whom true seekers think upon, life's true goal winning;

"By scripture 'Unknown, Not Thus, Not Thus,' declared;
"The One with whom naught can be matched or compared;

"From whom Siva, Brahma and Vishnu have sprung
"As parts of his essence, whose praises are sung;

"So great, yet to come to his servants he deigns,
"In play becomes man, shares their joys and their pains.

"If what scriptures tell us is really the truth,
"Fulfilled will our longing and pray'r be forsooth.

DOHA 137

In this way for six thousand years upon nothing
But water lived this saintly pair;
And yet more austere, seven thousand years longer
They lived upon nothing but air.

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CHAUPAI 145

Then even this means of support they forewent,
And standing on one foot ten thousand years spent.

The three gods looked on at this stern endless striving;
To Manu they often came, always contriving

To win him away; "Ask your boon," they insisted;
But firm in his purpose their wiles he resisted.

Their bodies were now simply bare skin and bone;
But nothing of pain did their minds feel or own.

The All-knowing Lord knew his servants right loyal,
Here living as hermits, of birth and house royal.

His "Ask what you will," made the heavens resound,
In voice that was kind, nectar-sweet and profound.

The voice that awakens the dead from sleep, straightway
Reached home to their heart as it entered ear-gateway.

Their bodies at once became youthful and vig'rous,
As tho' they had just left their home for life rig'rous.

DOHA 138

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

On hearing these words in that life-giving voice,
Their bodies were thrilled with their love;
His love overflowing, King Manu with rev'rence
Replied to the Great One above.

CHAUPAI 146

"O Lord, at whose feet the three gods humbly kneel,
"Who, like the divine tree and cow, hold'st our weal;

"Soon found by thy servants; to all good gifts giving;
"The suppliant's aid; lord of lifeless and living;

"If truly thou lovest us, friend of the friendless,
"In grace this boon grant us, bestowing joys endless;

"That form which in Siva's mind dwells, we are told,
"That form which true saints ever strive to behold,

"The form in Bhusundi's mind—swan in a lake,
"Finite, infinite, which their theme scriptures make;

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"O Lord, with this form do thou gladden our eyes;
"Kind saviour of suppliants, bid light arise."

These words of the saintly pair, full of affection
And meekness, delighted the Lord of Perfection.

He, dwelling in all, friend of all, well of kindness,
Revealed himself to them, dispelling all blindness.

DOHA 139

As blue as the lotus, as blue as the sapphire,
Dark blue as rain-clouds in a storm;
To shame would a million million Love-gods
Be put by his glorious form.

CHAUPAI 147

Like autumn moon perfect in beauty his face;
Cheeks, chin and neck dimpled and shell-like in grace;

Red lips; shapely teeth and nose; o'er all a smile
Whose light would shame moon-beams, and shines all the while;

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

His eyes like young lotus buds, bright with a glance
Whose beauty must all those who see it entrance;

His brows would the bow of the Love-god outshine;
Above on his forehead a fair sacred sign;

Fish-like gems in his ears; on his head golden crown;
Like swarming bees curls from his head hanging down;

A costly gem rests on his breast; and his neck
Fair garlands of flowers and jewels bedeck;

On lion-like shoulders a sacred thread hung;
And arms like an elephant's trunk, round and strong,

And on them bright armlets and bracelets enclasped;
Arrows bound at his waist and his bow firmly grasped;

DOHA 140

His bright yellow clothing would dim lightning's flash;
On his belly three lines are displayed;
The beauty and grace of his navel would put
Jumna's eddies and waves in the shade,

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CHAUPAI 148

His fair feet outrival the lotus in charm,
Round which saintly souls like bees over flow'rs swarm;
And there on his left in her glory co-eval,
The world-mother, beauty's crown, power primeval,
The one from whose essence, unnumbered, there spring
Lakshmis, Umas, Brahmanis—whose beauty we sing,¶
The beautiful Sita at Rama's left hand,
The play of whose eyebrows to worlds gives command.
The king and his wife, at this vision amazing
Of Vishnu as Rama, stood transfixed and gazing.
They rev'rently watched the divine apparition;
Their eyes never would have enough of this vision.
Transported with joy, un-self-conscious and calmed,
They fell at his feet, by his love overwhelmed.
With hand on each head as they knelt to adore him,
The gracious Lord bade them to rise up before him.

DOHA 141

"Now ask what you will, tell your greatest desire,"
Said the kindly compassionate Lord;
"The greatest boon ask that your heart can conceive;
"Of my favour be ever assured."

CHAUPAI 149

Much cheered by these words were the reverent pair,
And clasping his hands the king offered his pray'r:
"My lord, since your lotus-like feet we have seen,
"Fulfilled are the pray'rs of myself and my queen.
"One hope yet I have that I cannot discard,
"Yet scarcely can tell, 'tis so easy, so hard;

¶ Wives of the three gods—Siva, Vishnu and Brahma.

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"'Tis easy, my gracious lord, for you to give it,
"But hard 'tis for unworthy me to receive it;
"I'm like a poor man who cannot tell his wishes,
"Tho' finding his way to the heav'nly tree's riches;
"He knows not its pow'r, nor believes what it offers;
"Like him, from the hindrance of doubt my mind suffers;
"But every heart and its secrets you know;
"O Lord, this my longing I pray you bestow."
"Quit doubting," the Lord said, "and ask what you will;
"There's no wish, O king, that I cannot fulfil."

DOHA 142

The king replied, "Chief of all gen'rous ones Thou,
"I tell my wish truly as bidden;
"A son like to thee is the boon that I crave;
"From thee, my good Lord, naught is hidden."

CHAUPAI 150

VISHNU'S PROMISE TO MANU AND SHATRUPA

Observing their love, their words hearing so precious,
"So shall it be done," said the Lord all propitious;
"None else is my equal in virtue and worth;
"Hence, born as your son I'll again come to earth."
Then, seeing Shatrupa hands clasped, meek and quiet,
He said, "Name your wish, lady; faith can supply it."
"The boon that the king wisely asked," she replied,
"And you, Lord, have granted, has me satisfied.
"I know it is foolish and highly presumptive,
"Altho' you approve in your kindness redemptive.
"O Spirit Supreme, knowing all things, the source
"Of all gods and the lord of the whole universe;
"The thoughts of such greatness make faith hesitant,
"But 'tis done when you speak, you ne'er fail nor recant.
"The one who loves you and is loyal in faith,
"Finds heavenly bliss and a hope beyond death,

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DOHA 143

"My lord, in your kindness grant me such devotion,
"Such hope for the future, such bliss,
"Such longing and love for your feet, such discernment,
"And life now that leads on to this."

CHAUPAI 151

Thus pled the queen in her love and sweet modesty;
Vishnu replied, ever kindly in majesty,

"Know without doubt that, whatever may be
"The desire of your heart, it is granted by me.

"Your wisdom unworldly and keen, by my favour,
"Shall never pass from you, but be yours forever."

Then Manu again to the Lord humbly bent
And said, "I have one more desire to present;

"Devoted to you, tho' my son, I'd remain
"Your servant; let folks call me fool, 'tis in vain;

"On you hangs my life, without you no renewal,
"Like fish without water, or snake without jewel"¶

Thus making request, the Lord's feet he held fast;
The Gracious One said, "It shall be so at last;

"But now the command that I give you obey;
"Go straight to Lord Indra's abode and there stay.

SORATHA 18

"For some time let that be your home,
"In freedom and happiness live there together;
"You then Avadh's king shall become,
"And I will be born as your son, as I said.

CHAUPAI 152

"I'll take thus a human form, of my own will,
"And there in your home I myself will reveal;

¶ Legend has it that every snake has a jewel in its head or hood; without this it must die.

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"Embodied I'll be and with all of my parts,
"For the good of the faithful, those ways and those arts
"I'll follow, the story of which heard with rev'rence
"Destroys pride and passion, to all brings deliv'rance.
"Embodied shall be, too, my pow'r fundamental,
"The illusive mother of worlds elemental.
"Your own earnest longings shall thus be fulfilled;
" 'Tis true, ev'ry word true, for thus I have willed."
Repeating these words, all their doubting he banished,
And then once again from their vision he vanished.
The saintly pair lived in that place some years longer,
Their love for the Lord growing constantly stronger.
In due time they quietly passed thro' death's portals,
And reached Amaravati, home of immortals.

DOHA 144

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

(This then, Bharadvaja, said Saint Yajnavalkya,
Is one of the pure stories told
By Siva to Uma; another cause hear now
For Rama's birth in days of old.

CHAUPAI 153

As Siva told Uma, a third sacred story
I'll tell you, 'tis one well-known, holy and hoary.)
Kekaya's a country throughout the world known,
Where King Satyaketu was set on the throne,
Supporter of godliness, storehouse of wisdom,
Of power and glory and virtuous custom.
Two sons had the monarch, both staunch and courageous,
With virtue endowed and of valour prodigious;
The elder, Pratapabhanu, was well fitted
The throne to inherit when to him committed;
And Arimardan was the name of the younger,
In battle than he none more stalwart, none stronger.

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Sincere was the brotherly love of each brother,
Devoted, with naught of pretence, to each other.

In old age the king left the throne to his heir,
And went to the woods to find God and peace there.

DOHA 145

Throughout the whole kingdom the word was despatched,
When Pratapabhanu took the helm:
"The king knows the scriptures, will rule as they guide,
"That no evil may enter his realm."

CHAUPAI 154

The good Dharma-ruchi, the king's chief adviser,
Was gifted and kindly; no god could be wiser.

With such a wise counsellor, kinsmen so valiant;
Himself on the field, as his name,¶ sun-like, brilliant;

With hosts of all kinds set in glori'us array,
And countless great warriors keen for the fray;

The king was inspired as he watched in review;
The omens proved kindly and loud trumpets blew.

A host he prepared, then with banners unfurled,
On a well-chosen day went to conquer the world.

In place after place fiercest warfare was waged;
All foes he defeated wherever engaged;

By force of his armies he conquered all lands,
And left when they paid him his tribute demands.

In this way throughout the whole world in those times,
Sole ruler was he of all lands and all climes.

DOHA 146

The world having won by the might of his arm,
To his city he came with his treasure;
Thenceforth he devoted his time to religion,
To wealth, love and many a pleasure.

¶ Pratapabhanu means "Sun of valour and power."

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CHAUPAI 155

Such influence had he o'er all while he reigned,
That ev'rywhere wealth and success were maintained.

His subjects, devoted to God and their duty,
Were happy, care-free, one in virtue and beauty.

The counsellor, true to his God and to royalty,
Led all the people in honour and loyalty.

Courteous duties the king too observed;
Preceptors, gods, saints, elders, Brahmans he served;

The scriptural precepts for rulers he followed,
Well knowing 'tis well with all when these are hallowed;

He daily gave generous gifts from his coffers
And listened devoutly to truths scripture offers;

He opened up wells, bathing places and tanks,
Fine orchards, groves, gardens and flowery banks;

In pilgrimage spots he made shrines and abodes
For pilgrims and saints, priestly Brahmans and gods;

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

DOHA 147

As scripture ordains, all the great sacrifices
Of every form and variety,
Not once, but a thousand times thousand he offered,
With earnest devotion and piety.

CHAUPAI 156

In all this no selfish advantage he sought;
But always discerning and lofty in thought,

In will, word and deed one his aim and his motive,
To honour the Lord by acts rev'rent and votive.

His band the king one day prepared for the chase,
And mounting his horse t'wards the woods set the pace;

They ranged the thick jungle of Vindhyachal hills,
Where many a deer they chased, many their kills.

The king as he roamed saw a boar so feroci'us,
Like moon-grasping Rahu, the demon malici'us;

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It seemed the red orb was too much for his jaws,
But he could not disgorge it, his rage made him pause;

His tusks and his teeth were terrific; his hulk
Of a body and limbs were gigantic in bulk;

At sound of the horse coming t'wards him, he growled,
Pricked his ears in surprise, here and there his eyes rolled.

DOHA 148

The horse in its fright backward sprang as it saw
The dark monstrous, mountainous boar;
It would not go forward until the king sternly
Applied both his whip and his spur.

CHAUPAI 157

The boar, at the sight of the horse and its master,
Was off like the wind, running faster and faster.

The king fixed an arrow at once to his bow;
The wary boar watched as he ran, keeping low;

The hunter shot many a well-aimed shaft;
The boar escaped all by his cunning and craft.

Thus off ran the quarry, now hidden, now sighted;
The king followed always, to anger incited.

Led on by the boar in this wild forest venture,
The king reached a dense place his horse could not enter;

Altho' quite alone, weary, hungry for food,
The king would not leave the chase; still he pursued;

Beset by a hunter so daring and brave,
The boar sought and hid in a deep mountain cave.

The king now regretted his useless pursuit,
And found himself lost in the forest to boot.

DOHA 149

Distressed by fatigue, faint from hunger and thirst,
And by thoughts of his failure tormented,
The king with his horse sought a pond or a river,
And finding none wandered demented.

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CHAUPAI 158

While wand'ring the wood, he a hermitage spies,
Where lives as a hermit a king in disguise,

Whose kingdom by Pratapabhanu was taken;
The king then had fled and his armies forsaken;

He saw that his enemy's star was ascendant,
His own in decline, himself doomed a dependant;

He would not return to his home mortified,
Nor meet with Pratapabhanu in his pride;

With rage in his heart, tho' a king, like a beggar
A hermit he lived, body bare and food meagre.

When Pratapabhanu came near and surprised him,
The hermit at once as his foe recognized him;

But Pratapabhanu in direst distress
And ignorance, thought him a saint by his dress;

He got off his horse and gave rev'rent salute;
The hermit withheld his name, keenly astute.

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

DOHA 150

The hermit-king, seeing the hunter was fainting
With thirst, led him to a clear pool;
Pratapabhanu, with his horse, drank and bathed
In that water refreshingly cool.

CHAUPAI 159

The hunter, his weariness gone and at rest,
To his hut by the hermit was led as his guest.

The hermit, as ev'ning came on, made a bed
For his guest, but ere sleeping he quietly said:

"Who are you? Why wand'ring alone with no band,
"So handsome and young, with your life in your hand?

"A world-conq'ring ruler you seem by all signs;
"My heart, since we met, t'ward you warmly inclines."

The hunter said, "Counsellor I, saintly one,
"Of Pratapabhanu, lordly king of renown;

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"I lost my way hunting, lost also my quarry;
"But good fortune brought me here; no more I'm sorry;
"With one such as you 'tis not easy to meet;
"Some blessing awaits me, I know, at your feet."
"My son," said the hermit, "you're many a league
"From your city, night comes, scarcely gone your fatigue;

DOHA 151

"Dark night, a dense wood, and a pathway unseen,
"Tho' you knew ev'ry step and each turning;
"So make up your mind to stay here for the night,
"And return to your home in the morning."

(Says Tulsi, What's fated one cannot escape,
For it comes to one when 'tis its hour;
If you do not go to it, it comes to you
And then carries you off in its pow'r.)

CHAUPAI 160

Pratapabhanu this approved, and well-pleased
He tied up his horse and sat down with mind eased;
With reverent gestures he praised his good host,
And thought himself lucky to be there, tho' lost;
He said to the hermit in tones unassuming,
"As father I think of you, tho' 'tis presuming;
"As servant and son see me now here before you,
"And tell me your name; saintly father, who are you?"
He knew not his host, but was known all the while;
He was honest; his host was a man of great guile.
The hermit, his foe—warrior born, and by right
Also king—his own end sought by craft or by might;
The thought of his conqueror's ease and success
Kept his mind hot with hate and in painful duress;
The king's simple words made his heart wildly dance
With new hope; then rage checking, he grasped at his chance.

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DOHA 152

His clever plan laying, he answered with cunning,
In sweet tones that covered his stealth,
"My name is Bhikhari now; I am a beggar
"With no home, or fam'ly, or wealth."

CHAUPAI 161

The king replied, "Men of true wisdom and learning
"Like you, show their worth when all pride and rank spurning;

"Themselves and their gifts they from others conceal,
"And, tho' much deprived, know true joy and true weal;

"For this reason scriptures and saints all declare
"That the poor to the Lord are especially dear;

"A poor homeless beggar like you is a rival
"To Brahma and Siva; they fear for survival.

"Whoever you are, with sincere humble mind
"I bring my respect, sir, and pray you be kind."

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

At love shown so simply the hermit waxed confident
More in himself and occasion so provident;

More did he show of his make-believe friendliness,
Won the king to him by false show of kindliness.

"Listen," he said, "'tis the truth I am telling,
"O king; many long years has this been my dwelling.

DOHA 153

"Till now I have met no one, so could remain
"Quite unknown and discov'ry avoid;
"The love of the world and its fame is a fire
"By which discipline's groves are destroyed."

SORATHA 19

(Says Tulsi, Not wise men, but fools
Are deceived when a pleasant appearance they follow;
The peacock looks fine, and it calls
With sweet tones, but a poisonous snake 'twill devour.)

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CHAUPAI 162

"That's why I live hid," he said, "from all care freed;
"I seek the Lord only, him only I need.

"The Lord all things knows, tho' by none he's informed.
"What gains one by being to earth's ways conformed?

"As worthy high-minded son love you I must;
"I know that I have your affection and trust;

"To keep things from you and have secrets between us
"To me would be sin, wholly shameful and heinous."

The faith of the king in the hermit increased,
As he talked of a life from all longing released.

Then, seeing the king in her power held fast,
The false hypocritical saint said at last,

"My name is Ektanu, One Body, my brother."
The king bowed in rev'rence and said to the other,

"I, sir, as your servant more knowledge would glean;
"You've told me your name, tell me what it may mean."

DOHA 154

"In th' very beginning, the dawn of creation,"
The hermit said, "then was I born;
"My name is Ektanu, for no other body
"From then until now have I worn.

CHAUPAI 163

"My son, do not wonder, or doubt at my word;
"To spiritu'l discipline nothing is hard;

"By discipline Brahma brings all things to birth;
"By discipline Vishnu preserves the whole earth;

"By discipline Siva all beings destroys;
"By discipline Sheshnag maintains the world's poise;

"'Tis this sustains all things both unseen and visible;
"This is a pow'r to which naught is impossible."

Charmed was the king by the things thus related.
Then olden-time legends the hermit narrated,

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Of deeds and their fruits, deeds devout and heroic,
Of rigours and vows of men learned and stoic;

Creation, sustaining, destruction expounding,
He told many tales, all in wonder abounding,

The king now was caught in blind infatuation
And told to the hermit his true name and station,

Who said, "Well I know you; tho' on some pretext
"You kept back the truth from me, I am not vexed.

SORATHA 20

"It is a commendable policy;
"A king should not tell his name always, my friend;
"To say that he should is a fallacy;
"I love you the more for your wisdom and care.

CHAUPAI 164

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

"World ruler Pratapabhanu is your name;
"Your father was King Satyaketu of fame.

"I know all things fully, by grace of my Master,
"But do not tell others, for fear of disaster.

"When I saw your honesty, truth and simplicity,
"Trustfulness, courtesy, love and sagacity,

"Straightway affection within me arose;
"That's why, as you asked, I my story disclose.

"Now I am pleased and have no hesitation;
"Ask what you will then, without affectation."

These his host's words set the king's heart rejoicing;
He fell at his feet, thus his humble pray'r voicing:

"Since I, kindly saint, have this vision obtained
"Of you, all that man can desire I have gained;

"But, nevertheless, since your favour I hold,
"To ask a great boon without fear I make bold.

DOHA 155

"May I die in old age free from bodily pain,
"And may no one defeat me in war;

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"May I reign without enemies o'er all the earth
"For a hundred ages more."

CHAUPAI 165

"So will it be," said the hermit, "I hope;
"But one hard thing hinders, with it you must cope;

"The world and the age will acknowledge your power,
"The Brahmans excepted; to none will they cower;

"The Brahman by spiritual rigour is fortified;
"None can be safe when he's angry or mortified;

"When you have Brahman priests under your hand,
"The great Divine Triad will heed your command.

"'Gainst Brahmans no violent force will succeed;
"I sware 'tis the truth; so, my son, pay good heed.

"But never you'll perish; you're safe from the worst,
"Unless by a Brahman you're hated and curst."

The king was delighted and said in reply,
"I know now, sir, surely I never shall die;

"It is by your favour, O kind saintly one,
"That I for all time my true welfare have won."

DOHA 156

"Amen, may it be so," the false hermit said,
Then again his perversity hiding,
"Tell none of our meeting," he said, "if they learn of it,
"'Twill not be by my confiding.

CHAUPAI 166

"Now this is the reason for such strict admonishment;
"If it is told it will bring severe punishment;

"If it should come to a third pair of ears,
"You will perish and thus meet the worst of your fears.

"There's nothing, Pratapabhanu, that can slay you
"But curse of a Brahman and this thing told by you;

"By no other means can you meet fate adverse,
"Not even by Vishnu's or Siva's dread curse."

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The king at his feet said, " 'Tis true, sir; no creature
"Is saved from the wrath of a Brahman and teacher;

"A teacher from rage of a god can deliver,
"But none from the rage of a teacher, none ever.

"If I, then, your word should ignore or forget,
"I'll perish, I know, with no grounds for regret.

"But one thing I fear, sir, to me it is horrible;
"Fierce is the curse of a Brahman and terrible.

DOHA 157

"How can I win the goodwill of the Brahmans,
"And what must I do to this end?
"This one kindness grant me, I've no one so gracious
"To look to but you, as my friend."

CHAUPAI 167

"Pray hear me, O king," said the hermit, "there's many
"A doubtful and difficult plan; sure, not any.

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

"There's one by which soon would the problem be solved,
"But in it one difficult thing is involved;

"It rests upon me for success, but alas!
"The gates of your city I never can pass;

"In ent'ring no houses or towns I've persisted;
"To this day I've entered none since I existed;

"But, if I don't go there you'll come to distress;
"I'm puzzled, and pulled these two ways, I confess."

"The king replied humbly, "Forgive my presumption,
"But this scripture teaches, a basic assumption;

"The great one in mercy the lesser one aids;
"The tall mountain bears on its crest small grass blades;

"The bottomless sea bears the foam as it floats;
"The earth on its bosom bears tiny dust motes.

DOHA 158

"Be merciful to me, my master," he said,
As he fell at his feet once again,

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"In goodness and kindness, endure I implore you,
"For my sake, this trouble and pain."

CHAUPAI 168

The hermit said, seeing the king in his toils,
And carrying further his treacherous wiles,

"The truth is, O king—and let this be well heeded
"All things I can do; none is hard that is needed.

"You're wholly devoted to me—well I know you;
"I'll do what you ask of me, that much I owe you;

"Austerities, charms, tricks and magic will work,
"And be fruitful, if kept wholly secret and dark.

"My plan: You must serve a meal which I'll prepare;
"Of my name, birth and dwelling let none be aware;

"Then whoever eats of the food you thus serve
"Your every wish and command will observe;

"And hereafter, whoever eats in the home
"Of that person to you and your pow'r will succumb.

"Now, what you must do I will tell you and how;
"For one whole year place yourself under a vow.

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

DOHA 159

"Each day from the Brahmans a fresh hundred thousand
"As guests, with their families too,
"You must call, and then I ev'ry day will prepare
"All their food and the vow share with you.

CHAUPAI 169

"In this way, O king, with the least little bit
"Of trouble, the Brahmans to you will submit;

"In turn they will serve in their works sacrificial;
"The gods they'll win to you and make beneficial.

"And now I will give you a sign to assure you;
"In this form and guise I will not come before you;

"Your family priest I'll bring here for a space,
"By my illusive power, to live in this place;

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"By th' power I've gained from my long perseverance,
"I'll make him like me and I'll take his appearance;

"As long as I'm with you I'll make him stay here,
"And I in his place will serve you the whole year.

"But now take your rest, for the night is far spent;
"In three days we'll meet again with your consent;

"This night I will carry you while you are sleeping
"Back to your home and your people's safe keeping.

DOHA 160

"You'll know it is me when to you and your palace
"I come, there in that guise to find you;
"I'll call you aside and of all that has happened,
"Alone and in secret remind you."

CHAUPAI 170

The king sought his couch at the hermit's request;
The clever rogue sat on, nor took any rest.

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

The king in his weariness slept deep and sound;
The other immersed in deep thought no sleep found.

The boar who to mislead the king had contrived,
As dread demon Kalaketu then arrived;

An ally and friend of the hermit was he;
A tricky deceiver, none falser could be;

Ten brothers and one hundred sons long ago
He had, shameless brutes spreading evil and woe;

Pratapabhanu killed them all once in war,
When the gods, saints and priests could endure them no more.

The demon, rememb'ring and nursing his hate,
Consulted the hermit to settle the fate

Of his enemy and to accomplish his doom;
Unknown to the king 'gan these dangers to loom.

DOHA 161

(A powerful foe one should never despise,
Altho' he alone is confronted;

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By th' grim head alone of the demon Rahu¶
Both the sun and the moon still are daunted.)

CHAUPAI 171

The hermit-king rose when his ally he sighted
And greeted him gladly; then keenly delighted,

He told him of all that had just then transpired;
The demon, with eager excitement inspired,

Said, "Now you can have on your foe your revenge,
"If you follow my counsel; on that much will hinge.

"Go now, take your rest, let your mind be at ease;
"Without physic Providence heals your disease;

"Your foe with his fam'ly I'll sweep right away;
"In four days I'll meet you and make no delay."

At this cheering promise the hermit's face brightened.
The demon deceiver went off with rage heightened.

He carried Pratapabhanu with his horse
To his palace, asleep and unknowing of course;

The king by his sleeping queen safely he laid,
And the horse in a stall in the stables he tied.

DOHA 162

The family priest of the king he deprived
Of his senses and thus, non-resistant,
He carried him off by his magical pow'r
To a cave in the mountains far distant.

CHAUPAI 172

Himself he assumed the priest's form and as such,
He lay down to rest on his sumptuous couch.

The king awoke early and, smitten with wonder,
He found himself lying at home and not yonder;

He rose and the pow'r of the hermit admitting,
He went away softly, the queen all unwitting;

¶ Demon of eclipses.

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He mounted his horse and, that none might be knowing,
He went to the woods, no one seeing his going.

He came back at noon; of his safety thus learning,
His people in ev'ry house hailed his returning;

He saw, as he thought, his own priest and astounded
Remembered the scheme that the hermit propounded;

The false hermit's hold on his mind was so strong,
That the next three days seemed to the king an age long.

The fateful appointed time came and at last
The priest to the king recalled all that had passed.

DOHA 163

The king, recognizing his master, was happy;
All caution forgot and enthralled,
A full hundred thousand true Brahmans as guests
With their fam'lies he instantly called.

CHAUPAI 173

KING PRATAPABHANU AND THE BRAHMANS' CURSE

The priest then prepared for them all kinds of food,
Ordained by the scriptures, all tasty and good;

By magical power the meal and its spices
Were such, none could tell them whate'er his devices;

He cooked diff'rent kinds of meat; then in one dish
The rascal mixed pieces of Brahman priest's flesh;

He called all the guests, servants washed each one's feet,
Then politely he sat ev'ry one in his seat.

The king was beginning to serve, all unfearing,
When a heavenly voice cried aloud in their hearing:

"O Brahmans, get up and be off to your homes;
"Eat nothing, who eats here on him trouble comes;

"The flesh of a Brahman before you is placed."
Believing the voice, they all rose up in haste.

The king stood aghast, by illusion o'erpow'red;
Not a word could he say as fate over him low'red.

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DOHA 164

The Brahmans said, cursing the king in their fury,
Regardless of what might result,
"Go you and your family, demons become;
"He's a fool who would Brahmans insult.

CHAUPAI 174

"Kshatri monarch, we're Brahmans and never would hurt you;
"You've called us to ruin our caste and our virtue;

"But God has protected our honour and faith.
"Go all you and yours to a fate worse than death;

"Within the year perish, all you and your kind,
"Then water to offer not one will you find."

The king at such cursing was smitten with dread;
But once more the heavenly voice spoke and said,

"In cursing the king you've been unjust and thoughtless;
"No wrong has he done and his character's spotless."

The voice caused the Brahmans dismay at their blund'ring;
The king hurried off to the cooking-place, wond'ring;

Then finding no food there and no Brahman cook,
He returned to his guests grave in mind and in look;

He told what had happened, made ev'rything clear,
And fell to the ground in his anguish and fear.

DOHA 165

"Altho' you are faultless," they said, "yet what's fated
"Can never, O king,, be effaced;
"The curse of a Brahman is fearsome; what's written
"In deeds never can be erased."

CHAUPAI 175

The Brahmans departed with this their last word.
The people got tidings of what had occurred;

With minds vexed and bitter, their fate they derided:
"It started a swan; now a crow is provided."

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The demon returned the true priest to his own,
And then told the hermit of all he had done.

He next sent the news out in ev'ry direction;
Their armies the kings gathered ready for action;

They marched on the kingdom, the city besieged,
And day after day fiercest warfare was waged;

The king and his men bravely fought, but in vain;
Pratapabhanu and his brothers were slain;

The whole house of Satyaketu was destroyed;
A Brahman's curse ne'er can be made null and void.

The conq'rors restored and re-peopled the town
And returned to their kingdoms with victor's renown.

DOHA 166

(Give heed, Bharadvaja, said Saint Yajnavalkya;
When God and his ways are perverse,
The dust is like mountains, a rope is a serpent,
One's father a dread, deadly curse.)

BIRTH OF RAVAN AND HIS BROTHERS

CHAUPAI 176

Pratapabhanu in due course was reborn
As a demon; his family too in their turn;

The great Ravan named, with ten heads, twenty arms,
His prowess roused constantly fears and alarms.

As strong Kumbhakaran was born Arimardan,
The younger, who shrank from no foeman or burden.

The counsellor, wise Dharma-ruchi, became
The demon-king Ravan's half-brother of fame;

He's known to the world as the learned Vibhishan,
Whose firm faith in Vishnu reached fruitful completion.

All Pratapabhanu's retainers and sons
Were born as demoniac, devilish ones;

They embodied passion and tyrannous vengeance,
Malicious and cruel, devoid of all conscience;

They killed without mercy, excelled in wrong-doing;
Thus thro' the whole world untold trouble was brewing.

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DOHA 167

Altho' they were born in the line of Pulastya,
For holiness known and unrivalled,
The curse of the Brahmans had brought them to birth
With their forms and their minds all be-devilled.

CHAUPAI 177

Applying themselves with unspeakable vigour,
The three brothers set out on spiritual rigour.

Lord Brahma, on seeing their earnest endeavour,
Said, "Ask what you will: you have well earned my favour."

Himself humbly bowed at the feet of the Lord,
The ten-headed Ravan this blessing implored:

"May no one, my master, be able to slay me,
"But monkey or man; Lo! in your hands I lay me."

The Lord Brahma answered, "Your boon is assured;
"I, Brahma, will grant it, for much you've endured."

He next Kumbhakaran, gigantic in size,
Beheld, and the sight made him stand in surprise;

"This one is an ogre," he said, "never sated;
"If he eats this way all will be devastated."

He sent Sarasvati his mind to ensnare;
The giant asked six months' long sleep then and there.

DOHA 168

He next sought Vibhishan and told him to ask
For his boon; then Vibhishan replied,
"Pray grant, that true love for the Lord's pure lotus-feet
"In my heart may forever abide."

CHAUPAI 178

These boons having granted, Lord Brahma departed;
And they to their homes returned, now gladsome-hearted.

Now Maya the king had a beautiful daughter,
The peerless Mandodari; many had sought her;

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He knew Ravan would rule the demons, so wed her
To him; he the queen of his whole household made her.

Well pleased with his wife, a true gem among others,
The weddings he also arranged of his brothers.

Far out in the sea is a natural fortress,
A huge three-peaked mountain, not easy of access;

There demon-king Maya a town fortified,
Of fine stones constructed, with gold beautified;

'Twould rival the serpent-king's famed Bhogavati,
Or Indra's great capital, Amaravati;

Yes, more charming even than these one might own;
Throughout the whole world its name Lanka is known.

DOHA 169

Its moat on all sides is the deep mighty sea,
By the waters well-guarded it lies;
The strength of its walls and the beauty of all
Its adornments description defies.

RAVAN'S TYRANNY

In every age a great chieftain is sent there,
Whomever the Lord may ordain,
Unequalled in prowess and mighty in strength,
O'er the kingdom of demons to reign.

CHAUPAI 179

A great demon host had once lived in that place;
But the gods long ago had extinguished their race;

Then Indra an army of Yakshas sent there,
As guards of the town, with their leader Kuver.

When Ravan got news, he for conquest was eager,
So gathered his armies the fort to beleaguer.

The Yakshas all fled when they saw him advance
With his great demon warriors, trusting no chance.

Then ten-headed Ravan the city inspected.
Relieved that 'twas easi'r to win than expected.

To make it his capital Ravan intended,
By nature so charming and so well-defended.

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To each demon subject—to each as he needed—
A dwelling he gave; each one's comfort was heeded.
At one time Kuver, King of Yakshas, he fought,
Whose famed flower-chariot to Lanka he brought.

DOHA 170

Again, in sheer playfulness mountain Kailash
Once he lifted and moved from its station,
As tho' he were testing his strength as a fighter,
Which greatly enhanced his elation.

CHAUPAI 180

His health, wealth and happiness daily increased;
The spread of his wisdom and pow'r never ceased;
His family, armies and conquests o'er foes
Grew too, as by ev'ry gain greediness grows.
There with him was great Kumbhakaran, his brother;
As he strong and stalwart the world knew no other;
He slept six long months after taking strong drink;
When he wakened the Worlds into terror would sink;
Had he eaten a meal ev'ry day, I declare,
He would soon strip the universe naked and bare;
In war so courageous, 'twas thrilling to watch him;
In strength and in staunchness no fighter could match him.
Meghnad was another, Ravan's eldest son,
Who front rank among the world's heroes had won;
In battle no other this soldier surpassed;
The city of Indra he boldly harassed.

DOHA 171

With him were firm Akampan and ugly Kumukh,
Dhumraketu like meteors hurled,
Kulisharad huge-toothed, Atikaya the monstrous,
Alone each could conquer the world.

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CHAUPAI 181

As they willed they took form, caring nothing for beauty;
No thought entertained they of kindness or duty.

The ten-headed ruler one day sat amazed,
As at his innum'rable forces he gazed;

He saw many sons, grandsons, servants and friends,
A vast demon host he could use for his ends;

He gazed at his army, his mind big with vanity,
Then uttered words of impassioned insanity:

"Listen, ye demons whose power I boast;
"Our enemies now are the gods' heav'nly host;

"They never will dare to confront us in fight,
"But seeing their foes they take refuge in flight;

"I see but one way to o'ercome that obstruction;
"I'll show what I plan to achieve their destruction.

"Go! Where Brahmans eat, where oblations they render,
"Or sacrifice make; all such holy rites hinder.

RAVAN'S TYRANNY

DOHA 172

"When thus they are hungry and weakened, at length
"All the gods must perforce come and face me;
"And then I'll destroy them, or let them remain
"In subjection, whichever may please me."

CHAUPAI 182

He sent for Meghnad; him he sought to arouse
For the venture, his anger and strength to enthuse:

"Any gods who are powerful, valiant and staunch,
"And those who are ready on battle to launch,

"Go, conquer them all and then bring them here bound."
A challenge the son in his father's words found.

The king by such orders his whole army rallied,
And forth to the fray with his huge club he sallied.

The earth at his tread swung and shook in contortion;
His thundering brought the gods' wives to abortion.

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On hearing that Ravan was come with his braves
And in anger, the gods hid in Mount Meru's caves.

In ev'ry direction the demon-king marched,
But each place was empty wherever he searched;

Again and again did he try to arouse them
With lion-like roar and began to abuse them;

He ran wildly here and there, mad with war-lust
But found ne'er a foeman at whom he could thrust.

The sun, moon and stars, time and death, fire and wind,
All beings and powers of every kind,

Gods, demi-gods, mendicant saints, common men,
He sought out persistently time and again;

Where'er in creation were warriors of might,
Male or female, fierce Ravan was eager to fight;

To bring them to bottle them all he pursued;
But all yielded to him, without war subdued.

DOHA 182¶

The whole universe by his power he conquered;
He made ev'ry creature his minion,
And over all things by his own will and counsel
Asserted his rule and dominion.

CHAUPAI 190¶

Whatever Meghnad¶¶ had been ordered when stirred,
Was all done at once, done on hearing the word.

Hear now what was done by the rest of the band
To whom at the first Ravan gave his command.

That horrible demon crew, all evil-doers,
Tormented the gods with their devilish powers;

As suited their purpose their forms they selected;
To unjust deception their victims subjected;

Whatever would wipe out religion and truth,
Against all the scriptures they did without ruth;

¶ See end of Book I, Interpolation, for gap in numbers.
¶¶ Also called Indrajit.

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Wherever a cow or a Brahman was found,
That city or village they burned to the ground.

Nowhere could be found decent folks and well-mannered;
Nor scripture, nor priest, nor preceptor was honoured;

No sacrifice, off'ring, devotion, or praying;
No reading of scripture; no hint of obeying.

CHHAND 18

Cruel Ravan was there, At the least hint of pray'r,
Temp'rance, sacrifice, discipline, vigil;
He was off like a shot, And he wiped out the lot
With his terrible rage and his cudgel.

The whole world was curst, With the basest and worst;
Not a trace or a sound of religion;
Scripture readers devout, Ravan turned them all out,
And threatened them more with his dudgeon.

SORATHA 21

RAVAN'S TYRANNY

The tyrannous wrongs were unspeakable
Committed by Ravan's vile army of demons;
Unlimited, well-nigh unbreakable,
The power and curse seems of those who love slaughter.

CHAUPAI 191

The numbers increased of the thievish and treacherous,
Covetous gamblers and those who were lecherous;

Parents and gods too men openly flouted,
And forced saints and scholars to labours unsuited.

(Said Siva to Uma, when thus man behaves,
He's just like all demons and rascally knaves.)

With virtue and truth thus defied and forsaken,
Poor Earth, agitated and fearful, was shaken;

"The weight of seas, mountains and streams is a pebble,"
She said, "when compared with the weight of one rebel."

Religion she saw was perverted and wrested;
In terror of Ravan none ever protested;

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A cow's form assuming, Earth went with much thought
To the place of the gods and saints; aid there she sought;
She wept as she told them the ills she must suffer;
But naught could they do for her, aid none could offer.

CHHAND 19

Then gods, nymphs and saints, With one mind their complaints
To the Lord, the Creator, presented;
Mother Earth, urgent now, In her form of a cow,
Also told of the wrongs she resented.

Brahma said, "I know well, All the evils you tell;
"But in this there's no help I can render;
"He whose service you own, Everlasting his throne,
"Only He is our help and defender.

SORATHA 22

"Be patient, O Earth, and take courage,
"With heart and mind set at the Lord's feet," said Brahma,
"He knows all the things that discourage
"His people, and in his own time will dispel them."

DELIVERANCE PROMISED TO GODS AND SAINTS

CHAUPAI 192

The gods sat in thought and their needs they discussed,
"The Lord, where to find him? For find him we must."
"To Paradise we must all go," was one notion;
Another, "He dwells by the wide milky ocean."
The truth is, the Lord to each one is revealed
Whose heart with true love and devotion is sealed.
Said Siva, "I, Uma, was present and shared
"The discussion, and to them my mind thus declared:
"The Lord pervades all things, below and above;
"Omnipresent, he's seen and revealed by true love;
"Pray tell me the country, direction, time, place,
"Where he is not found, where he leaves not a trace;

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"Tho' sep'rate from all, always present He's been
"To love, as in wood fire by rubbing¶ is seen.

"By all those who heard them my words were approved;
" 'Tis true, said Lord Brahma, himself deeply moved."

DOHA 183

With gladness of heart, body thrilling, and eyes
Filled with tears, the Lord Brahma, Creator,
Hands joined, mind controlled, sang the praises of Vishnu,
The Great singing praise of the Greater.

CHHAND 20

"Hail again and again, Him who blesses all men,
"Lord of lords, aid of all heavy-laden;
"Help of cows and of Brahmans, Destroyer of demons;
"The lord of fair Lakshmi, sea-maiden.

"Earth and heaven he feeds; Of his marvellous deeds
"None can fathom the secret or end;
"He by nature is kind, To the humble in mind;
"May he aid us who on him depend.

DELIVERANCE PROMISED TO GODS AND SAINTS

"Hail, Thou Deathless One, Hail, Who in all forms dost dwell,
"All-pervading, in all bliss supreme;
"Without limit or bond, Un-illusioned Mukund,
"Wholly pure, beyond all sense or dream.

"All the pure saintly host, In thy name make their boast,
"Free from error, self's cravings foregoing;
"They by night and by day, Sing thy praises and pray;
"We too hail thee, All-Good and All-Knowing.

"By thee all things had birth, In hell, heaven and earth,
"None to help thee, none since, none before thee;
"Poor in worship and piety, Lord—our anxiety
"Lift from our hearts, we implore thee.

"Hope and joy of the sages; The fears of all ages
"And troubles by thee are dispersed;
"In thee refuge we find, Sought with heart, soul and mind,
"Tho' in utt'rance uncouth and unversed.

¶ Or, "as when wind blows the fire can be seen."

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"Tho' the goddess of knowledge, Philosophers' college,
"The Veda divine and Purana,
"With naught can compare thee, As one they declare thee,
"The Merciful Lord, Bhagawana.

"Mandara Mount in the Ocean, Of this world's commotion,
"All beauty, all virtue, all blessing;
"We bow at thy feet, And thy succour entreat,
"In our troubles and fears so distressing."

DOHA 184

The fears of the gods, mother Earth and the saints,
Reached his heart and a heavenly voice,
To their love gave assurance in answer and bade them
To lift up their hearts and rejoice.

CHAUPAI 193

"Away with your fears sages, saints and immortals;
"For you I will pass once again thro' birth's portals;

"With all of my powers, I tell you in honesty,
"Man I'll become in the noble Sun-Dynasty.

"Kashyap and Aditi much have endured,
"And from me the boon that they sought have secured;

"As Dasrath and Kausalya now they appear,
"Whom Koshala's people as rulers revere.

"Four brothers, all noble, to them shall be born,
"And th' glory of Raghu's line royal adorn.

"With Lakshmi, my energy, man's form I'll take,
"And thus Narad's curse true but harmless will make;

"I'll conquer earth's troubles; be no longer fearful,
"Ye gods, but take courage in hopes bright and cheerful."

As this divine voice reached the ears of the gods,
They went their way, ready to face any odds.

Then Brahma gave Earth his last comforting word,
Which scattered her fears and her courage restored.

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DOHA 185

Before he returned to his realm, Brahma urged
That the gods in these great doings share;
"Go you to earth also as monkeys," he said,
"Serve our lord and his cause of love there."

CHAUPAI 194

The gods ev'ry one to his own home returned;
Earth too, all at rest by the things she had learned;

The counsel of Brahma they gladly obeyed,
And eager to do it, in nothing delayed.

On earth, as he said, they assumed monkey form
And with valour began mighty deeds to perform;

Their weapons were claws, trees and hills; none could rival
Their pow'r as they waited Lord Vishnu's arrival;

All over the mountains and forests they swarmed;
There well-trained and orderly armies they formed.

BIRTH OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

(I've told of great people and things they were doing;
Now hear things that elsewhere were meanwhile ensuing.)

In Avadh King Dasrath, of Raghu's line royal,
Ruled well as a student of scripture and loyal;

A virtuous king, wise and truly religious,
Whose love for the bow-bearing lord was prodigious.

DOHA 186

His queens were Kausalya and two other wives,
All loving and loved and obedient,
Examples of faithfulness, modesty, virtue,
With love for the Lord they were radi'nt.

CHAUPAI 195

At one time the king was despondent and worried;
No son had he thro' whom his line would be carried.

He went and appealed to his priest and preceptor,
With rev'rence, tho' king and tho' wielding the sceptre;

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He told of his joys, of his hopes and his grief;
Vashishth gave an answer that brought him relief;

"Be patient, O king," he said, "four sons you'll have,
"World-known, who the faithful from trouble will save."

The holy saint Sringi was called by the priest,
Who performed then the son-bearing sacrifice feast,

The saint the oblation devotedly offered;
The Fire-god appeared and a portion he proffered;

"The purpose," he said, "that Vashishth had in mind
"Has succeeded; in good time its fruit you will find;

"This portion I therefore to you am committing;
"Divide it, O king, as to you seems most fitting."

DOHA 187

The god of fire vanished from sight with these words,
And what they must do having told;
The joy and the comfort this gave to king Dasrath
Was more than his heart could well hold.

CHAUPAI 196

His queens he called; as he loved one, he loved all;
Kausalya brought both sister queens at his call;

He broke in two pieces the portion provided,
Gave one to Kausalya, the other divided;

Of these to Kaikeyi again he gave one;
The other divided again, and this done,

These two queens assenting by touching one part,
He gave both to Sumitra, rejoicing her heart.

Each queen ate her portion and thus became pregnant;
Rejoicing and hope in each bosom was regnant.

At once when as Rama the Lord was conceived,
The whole world new wealth, hope and comfort received.

As one in their palace the three consorts reigned;
Their radiance, virtue and beauty maintained.

The days and the months for all happily passed;
Came the time of the Lord's revelation at last.

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DOHA 188

When the stars, constellations, the time and the season,
The day and the hour were auspicious,
Lord Rama was born, joy of lifeless and living,
To all things supremely propitious.

CHAUPAI 197

On the ninth day of Chait, month of spring, near full moon,
'Neath the clear signs of conquest and love—a rare boon,

Nor too hot, nor too cold, but a day in fair season,
The whole world was calm and at ease for this reason.

From heaven refreshing cool breezes were wafted;
The gods all rejoiced, saintly minds were uplifted;

The woods bloomed with flow'rs, mountains glistened with gems,
The rivers were all filled with life-giving streams.

This Lord Brahma judged the right time and occasion;
The gods in their chariots set forth in procession;

BIRTH OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

The clear sky was filled with the heav'nly arrays,
And angel bands sang as they went heav'nly lays;

They rained down on earth fragrant bunches of flowers,
While sounds of glad music accomp'nied these showers.

Gods, serpents and saints joyous praise to him rendered;
Sincere homage, as he thought fitting, each tendered.

DOHA 189

They brought him to earth; then the gods their pray'rs off'ring
Returned each again to his place;
While he in whom all the earth dwells and finds refuge,
In love among men showed his face.

CHHAND 21

The all-loving and kind, To a world lost and blind,
Was revealed and Kausalya was raptured;
His mother with joy, Saw the form of her boy,
Which the hearts of the saintly has captured.

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His glance brightly glowed; Body dark as a cloud;
In his four hands four weapons he held;
Flowers hung to adorn; As a big-eyed babe born,
Rama, glory's one fount, she beheld.

"One may have endless days, But can ne'er sing thy praise,
"To the full," she said, hands humbly clasped;
"Whom the scriptures proclaim, Perfect, ever the same,
"Free from passion, by no mind e'er grasped.

"Whom the saint and the sage, Laud in every age
"As the sea of bliss, goodness and grace;
"Thou tho' heaven's great king, Art revealed joy to bring
"To my heart and for love of our race.

"Sacred books all declare, In thine every hair,
"By illusion, all worlds may be found;
"That thou, Lord, shouldest come, To the world by my womb,
"Such a jest would the surest confound."

To her thought keen and grave, Smiling answer he gave,
As he planned lots of things to be done;
Many stories he told, Of his deeds new and old,
That her love he might hold as her son.

When her mind was thus swayed, By this wonder, she said,
"My darling, give up this your guise;
"Play the baby again; Thus let love be made plain;
"No greater joy can you devise."

When he heard this request, As he lay at her breast,
As a baby the Lord of All cried.
Who his praises repeat, As they kneel at his feet,
Shall o'er life's deepest depths safely ride.

DOHA 190

For the sake of cows, Brahmans, immortals and saints,
Human body Lord Rama has taken;
Tho' beyond all illusion, all limit, all sense,
Of his own will that life he's forsaken.

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CHAUPAI 198

On hearing the sound of a wee baby crying,
To see him the other queens quickly came flying;

Their maidens ran here and there wildly excited;
The whole of the city was greatly delighted.

When King Dasrath heard that a son had been given
To him, he rejoiced with a joy as of heaven;

Love filling his mind and his body all thrilled,
'Twas not easy to rise till his mind he had stilled.

"The one by whose name," he said, "bliss is obtained,
"That great one to come to my dwelling has deigned."

While thus the king's heart with his thankful joy bounded,
He caused joyful music and songs to be sounded.

For Vashishth his preceptor, he eagerly sent,
And for others to share in the happy event;

His gaze from the babe he could scarcely withdraw,
Whose beauty and promise showed never a flaw.

BIRTH OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

DOHA 191

The Nandimukh ancestor-rite was gone through,
And all other birth-rites performed;
By giving the Brahmans gold, cows, clothes and jewels,
The generous king their hearts warmed.

CHAUPAI 199

The city was bright with flags, arches and banners
Of all kinds, and set up in various manners;

Flow'rs rained down from heaven, defying all sadness,
And all hearts were filled with a heavenly gladness.

The women rose up and forth eagerly fared,
In bands, themselves first having fitly prepared;

With bright-omened gifts in gold salver and chalice,
And singing gay songs, each group came to the palace;

They offered their gifts as they circled around him,
And humbly they fell at his feet where they found him.

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Bards, minstrels and players, in choir and in drama,
All sang the high praises and virtues of Rama;

With generous heart each on each gifts would heap;
With generous heart none the present would keep;

They sprinkled musk, saffron and sandalwood scent,
And made the streets muddy wherever they went.

DOHA 192

His welcome was sung in each home with sweet music
"The Treas'ry of Bliss has appeared."
'Mong armies of women and men ev'rywhere
Happy sounds of rejoicing were heard.

CHAUPAI 200

Kaikeyi and Sumitra also gave birth
To sons of unusual beauty and worth.

The people, the times, and their joys were the finest
E'er known, hard to tell e'en by powers divinest.

In Avadh, it seemed, with such lavish provision,
As tho' Night had come in the hope of a vision

Of Rama, but seeing the Sun she had veiled
Her beauty, and so it seemed ev'ning prevailed;

Around were dark clouds of thick incense and smoke,
But from streaks of red powder it seemed dawn had broke;

Like bright stars and planets the palace gems shone;
Thro' clouds gleamed its pinnacles like the full moon;

Within was the singing of scripture's sweet words
At morn, noon and eve, like the singing of birds.

The sun, these things watching, his duties forgot;
Unwitting, he stayed a whole month in one spot.

DOHA 193

The day was a month long, but nobody noted
The marvel in mood so exalted;
The night could not come when throughout all that time
Both the sun and his chariot were halted.

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CHAUPAI 201

None noticed the marvel, it caused no regret;
Lord Rama's praise chanting, the sun at last set.

The gods, saints and serpents, their happiness voicing
At sharing the festival, went back rejoicing.

Said Siva, "I know, Uma, your faithful soul;
"I'll tell how a place in these doings I stole.

"At th' time I was there with Bhusundi the crow;
"We both took man's form so that no one might know;

"Our minds filled with rapturous joy and affection,
"We went thro' the city in ev'ry direction.

"He only such fortunate ways can embrace,
"On whom rests in fulness our Lord Rama's grace."

The king at that season most gen'rous gifts gave
To all those who came, to each what he would have;

Equipages, elephants, horses and cattle,
Fine jewels and clothing and much precious metal.

BIRTH OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

DOHA 194

He pacified all men, and they in return
Prayed that each of the princes might pass
His days full of blessing, that each might live long,
Those divine lords of poor Tulsi Das.

CHAUPAI 202

In this fashion time soon passed quickly away,
But no one took notice of night or of day.

In due time the king the fit season proclaimed,
And sent for Vashishth that the boys might be named,

He welcomed the priest, paid him reverent dues,
Then asked him for each prince a fit name to choose.

Said the priest, "Many wonderful names have these princes;
"To each I will give one that his traits evinces;

"He who is the ocean of joy, blessing's treasure,
"By whose grace alone ev'ry realm finds true pleasure,

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"In whom the whole world may in peacefulness bide,
"Shall Rama be called, meaning bliss unalloyed.

"He who the whole universe feeds and supports,
"He shall be called Bharat, which Bearer purports.

"Shatrughna means Victor, by this men shall know
"Him whose mere thought and mem'ry destroys ev'ry foe.

DOHA 195

"Seat of all that's auspicious, the darling of Rama,
"In whom all find hope bright and sure,
"His name shall be Lakshman, which means happy fortune."
Vashishth thus gave names to the four.

CHAUPAI 203

When thus he had named them, the saintly preceptor
Said, "Your sons, O king, are the essence of scripture,

"The saint's only wealth, Siva's own precious joy
"Who himself finds delight in the pranks of a boy."

From the first to Lord Rama was Lakshman obedi'nt,
And owned that to serve him was right and expedi'nt;

The others, Shatrughna and Bharat, adored
And served their big brother as elder and lord.

In each pair one dark and one fair; the three mothers
Were proud, so broke grass to keep ill from the brothers.¶

They all behaved nobly, were handsome and courteous;
Of them all Rama was most loved and virtuous;

Like the moon's light was the love of his heart,
Which to all in sweet smile-rays he sought to impart.

At times in his cradle, at times on her breast,
His mother her "darling" would fondle and rest.

DOHA 196

The Lord Omnipresent, tho' passionless, infinite,
And beyond pleasure, lay yonder;

¶ A practice to avert the evil eye that might smite through too fond and proud looks.

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Tho' unborn, he rested on Kausalya's bosom
With love for love—that is the wonder.

CHAUPAI 204

As dark as rain-clouds, or blue lotus, with charms
Of a myriad Cupids, he lay in her arms;

His feet like red lilies; his little nails showing
Like pearls on the petals, each milky and glowing;

On each sole the flag, goad and thunderbolt print;
And anklets whose tinkling would ravish a saint;

A girdle of bells at his waist; three-lined dimple;
And navel so deep—if but seen faith were simple;

Long arms, each by bright jewelled armlets encircled;
A tiger's claws set in gems near his heart sparkled;

A diamond necklet; and there on his breast
A Brahman's plain foot-print¶ the mind to arrest;

A neck and chin shell-like in grace, and above
A face with the charm of untold gods of love;

BIRTH OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

Two teeth above, two below; lips full and red;
A nose and a forehead-mark—fit words have fled!

Two well-shapen ears and two beautiful cheeks;
In sweet childish prattle and lisping he speaks;

His eyes full and blue like the fair lotus-queen;
Two heavy brow arches and locks in between;¶¶

His mother oft tended the hair of her child,
It shone thick and curly, and always well-oiled;

In a bright yellow shirt his wee body was clad;
On his hands and knees crawling—a ravishing lad!

Who could tell all his charm? Why, a god would be daunted;
One may get a faint grasp if vision be granted.

¶ Legend says Vishnu was kicked by a Brahman when asleep and always bore the mark.

¶¶ This couplet is not in some old editions, but is in others, and is needed to give a full description of the infant Rama.

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DOHA 197

He who is all bliss, un-illusioned, transcending
The mind's "thus and so", or its "may be,"
Submitting to Dasrath's and Kausalya's love,
Showed the sweet nat'ral ways of a baby.

CHAUPAI 205

So lived he who is the world's mother and father,
The people of Avadh could happiness gather.

Said Siva, "In this way he comes, as their own,
"To those who in trust and love Rama enthrone.

"Opposed to him none o'er the world is victori'us,
"Altho' their endeavours be long and labori'us.

"That very Illusion which all things enthralls—
"Before the Lord Rama in trembling she falls;

"She dances and moves at the play of his brows.
"Whom else should one worship? To whom pay love's bows?

"Him serving in trust, not in ways proud and clever,
"With heart, hand and voice, wins his mercy forever."

The Lord played just like any sweet baby boy,
Giving all Avadh's people immeas'rable joy.

His mother sometimes in his cradle would swing him;
At times to her bosom for nursing would bring him.

DOHA 198

The passing of day and of night she forgot,
In the joy that to mothers belongs;
She constantly showered her love and care on him,
And sang to him sweet childhood songs.

CHAUPAI 206

One morning his mother first washed him and dressed him,
And then in his cradle she quietly placed him;

This done she prepared for her own household god
An off'ring of fit sacrificial food;

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When the worship was done, with the god the meal shared,
She went to the place where the food was prepared;

Returning, her own son she saw with surprise
Was eating the food; she could scarce trust her eyes;

All worried she turned, at his bed took a peep,
And there saw the baby was still fast asleep;

Turning back to the altar, her son was still there;
Her heart jumped in great agitation and fear;

"One here, one there! Two babies! Marvellous spectacle!
"Is it my mind at fault? Is it a miracle?"

Seeing his mother so deeply concerned,
The Lord to her worry a bright smile returned.

DOHA 199

Then to her a sight of his wondrous true form,
His form universal, he showed;
In every hair of his body before her
A myriad bright worlds glowed.

CHILDHOOD OF RAMA

CHAUPAI 207

Many Sivas, Brahmas, suns and moons with bright beams
Did she see; many worlds, oceans, woods, hills and streams;

She saw time and fate; virtue, wisdom and nature;
She saw things ne'er seen or heard by any creature;

Illusion she saw also folding her hands,
With pow'r over all, tho' in trembling she stands;

All souls by Illusion she saw set in motion,
And that which her power breaks, faithful devotion;

O'ercome with the thrill, she could utter no sound,
But bowed with eyes closed and in rev'rence profound.

Her trouble he saw; then again he, whose name
Makes the demons to tremble, an infant became.

She offered him praise, but one thing made her fear
That as son she the father of worlds held too dear;

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While he, the Lord, made this request on his part:
"Tell no one these things, mother dear to my heart."

DOHA 200

As oft as he made his request, her hands folded
Kausalya would make her petition,
"Oh, never again may your power illusive
"Confuse me, my lord, with such vision."

CHAUPAI 208

The Lord by his ways and his childish behaviour
Delighted the people and soon won their favour.

As days and months passed the four brothers grew bigger
And pleased all around by their true manly vigour.

In time by the priest all the four heads were shaven;
Again at this rite gifts to Brahmans were given.

The four little lads, ne'er bad-tempered or spiteful,
Ran 'round and played games in a manner delightful;

The Lord who all utt'rance and knowledge transcends,
In Dasrath's court played with his brothers and friends.

Sometimes when his father would call him to meals,
He would not leave his playmates, despite all appeals;

His mother, herself, then must go out to fetch him,
But he scampers off and defies her to catch him;

She carries him back in a mischievous rumpus,
Whom scripture nor Siva can fathom or compass;

There's dust and dirt over his body and face,
But the king laughs and takes him in loving embrace.

DOHA 201

Then during the meal, with a glance here and there,
In his mouth rice and curds quickly stuffing,
The mischievous restless young boy scampers off
In high glee, wildly chuckling and laughing.

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CHAUPAI 209

These lads and their boyhood so handsome and fine,
Have been lauded by both human bards and divine.

The birth of that person is vain and frustrated
Whose heart by these things is not warmed and elated.

On reaching young manhood, was giv'n to each lad
By their parents and priest the "twice-born's" sacred thread.

They then to their teacher's house went for instruction
And soon as adepts they confirmed their induction.

'Tis strange that the Lord, he whose essence embodies
All knowledge and truth, should submit to these studies.

When well-versed in truth, duty, faith and such things,
They took part in the pastimes and sports of all kings;

The arrow and bow in their hands was a sight
For the gods; those who saw were o'ercome with delight;

The people who followed the lads as they played,
And watched them, with tiredness at length were down-weighed.

DOHA 202

CHILDHOOD OF RAMA

To the people of Avadh, whoever they were,
Men and women, both aged and young,
To all of them Rama was dearer than life,
And all on his graciousness hung.

CHAUPAI 210

With his brothers and friends Rama oft sought the place
In the forest where all could engage in the chase.

Lots of good game they hunted with might and with main,
And they showed ev'ry day to the king what was slain;

The animal killed by Lord Rama's shaft gained
Release from the body and heaven attained.

With his brothers and friends he partook of his food,
And the will of his parents he always pursued.

What was best for his people he always conceded,
And graciously did for them all that was needed.

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The scriptural stories and truths he would learn,
And then to his brothers would teach them in turn.

Ev'ry day he would rise as the morning was breaking;
From parents and teacher respectful leave taking,

The duties of state zealously he performed;
Thus the king with his ways and his spirit was charmed.

DOHA 203

Beyond passion and art, birth and sign, name and form,
In all things he abides, the Resplendent;
Yet for sake of the faithful, in wonderful ways
Here he lived as a person dependent.

CHAUPAI 211

Thus far I have told of the Lord's early years;
Another event I will tell—lend your ears.

In th' woods was a quiet, select hermitage,
Where lived Visvamitra, a most holy sage;

In sacrifice, worship and pray'r he engaged,
Which demons Marich and Subahu enraged;

When an off'ring they saw, to the place quick they doubled,
The worship upset and the worshipper troubled.

The mind of the saint with this worry was filled,
"By none but the Lord can these demons be killed."

And then he remembered the Lord from above
Had come as a man, the world's woes to remove;

He said, "I will go to him with this my plea,
"That he and his brother will come back with me;

"And so I will fill my glad eyes at the well
"Where wisdom and temp'rance and virtue all dwell."

DOHA 204

When thus he resolved, he could brook no delay,
But at once with this firm resolution
He hasted away to the court of the king,
Having finished his morning ablution.

DEMONS SLAIN TO AID VISVAMITRA

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CHAUPAI 212

When he heard that the hermit was coming to meet him,
The king with a comp'ny of priests went to greet him;

The rev'rence that all to the saintly should own
He paid him, and gave him a seat on his throne;

As he washed the saint's feet and paid all due respect,
"No other," he said, "can such fortune expect".

He brought tasty food to him, many a kind,
That his guest satisfaction and pleasure might find.

His four sons were brought to the saint and presented,
Who almost from vows of detachment relented;

To Rama's bright face his affection was drawn,
As the moon at the full holds the partridge till dawn.

The king to the saint said, more joyous than ever,
"You never before, sir, have granted this favour;

"So tell me the cause of your visit, I pray;
"I'll do what I can for you without delay."

DEMONS SLAIN TO AID VISVAMITRA

Said the saint, "By great demons I'm sorely distrest,
"O king, and your aid I have come to request;

"With his brother send Rama, I pray, divine victor;
"The demons he'll slay and will be my protector.

DOHA 205

"Let no selfish, ignorant longing prevent you;
"Send both with a glad willing spirit;
"For them and for others 'twill be a great blessing,
"For you 'twill mean honour and merit."

CHAUPAI 213

When th' king heard this cruel demand, tho' not frail,
His heart jumped its beats and his colour went pale;

"These four sons," he said, "in old age I've received;
" 'Tis a thoughtless request, sir; you'd have me bereaved;

"You may ask of me money, gems, cattle, or land;
"I'll give my all gladly, whate'er you demand;

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"Than his body and life naught is dearer to man,
"I will gladly this moment give that if I can;

"But I love these four lads, they are dearer than life;
"I cannot give Rama where danger is rife;

"My son, young and tender, cannot be compared
"With those fierce cruel demons of whom I have heard."

When these love-inspired words of the monarch he heard,
The saint's heart afresh with high rapture was stirred.

Vashishth, the preceptor, then wisdom employed
In counsel, and all the king's doubts were destroyed;

Obedient, at once for the two lads he sent,
Embraced them and bade them to go with the saint.

To th' saint he said, "These are my life, but now rather
"Must they look to you, only you, as their father."

DOHA 206

With many a pray'r for their blessing, the king
To the saint then committed the lads;
They went first to their mother's own rooms to take leave
Of her, reverently bowing their heads.

SORATHA 23

And so the two princes departed,
Right glad to remove all the fears of the saint;
Compassionate, both lion-hearted,
They went firm in purpose to do the world service.

CHAUPAI 214

The brothers bright-eyed, strong-armed, chest firm and broad,
With their lotus-like beauty, set off on their road;

Clad in bright yellow cloth, quivers slung on their backs,
Bow and arrow in hand, well prepared for attacks;

One dark and one fair, handsome both, in good health;
Visvamitra in them had obtained precious wealth.

Said he, "To my heart I the Lord God have taken,
"And he for my sake has his father forsaken."

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On th' way he a fierce demoness pointed out,
Named Tarka, who rushed at them, giving a shout;

With simply one arrow the Lord Rama slew her,
And place in his heav'n for her meekness gave to her.

The saint yet more clearly his Lord recognised;
Yet the lord of all wisdom he wisely advised;

The way to o'ercome thirst and hunger he told,
And how to be healthy, strong, active and bold.

DOHA 207

He courte'usly took them inside his own dwelling,
And all kinds of weapons made over;
He fed them on herbs, roots and fruits, knowing Rama
The saints' true defender and lover.

CHAUPAI 215

At the break of day, Raghurai¶ said to the saint,
"Go, sacrifice sir, without fear or restraint."

DEMONS SLAIN TO AID VISVAMITRA

The saint then began to prepare his oblation,
The Lord standing by him in guardian station.

When demon Marich heard this in morning's hush,
With his helpers that foe of the good made a rush;

But Rama set one headless arrow in motion
That knocked him a hundred leagues over the ocean.

Subahu he then with a shaft of fire slew,
While Lakshman disposed of the rest of the crew.

The demons thus killed, all the hermits were fearless,
And they with the gods praised these two heroes peerless.

His brother and Raghurai stayed there a while;
All the Brahmans were blest with his bright gracious smile;

Full of love, the saints told to them many a tale
From the scriptures, altho' Rama knew them all well.

¶ Prince of Raghu, a name of Rama.

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Visvamitra himself told one tale; as he told it
He said, "You yourself, Lord, should go to behold it."

At once, when he heard of the Trial of the Bow,
Rama said he was glad, he and Lakshman would go.

They saw on the way a place empty and quiet,
Not one living creature was in it or by it;

They saw a great stone lying there, huge and hoary,
And asked what it meant; the saint told them its story:

DOHA 208

"This is Gautama's wife, who by pow'r of a curse
"Became stone, and in patience must wait
"For the touch of the dust of your lotus-like feet;
"Lord, be kind, set her free from this fate."

CHHAND 22

At the touch of those feet, That all sorrows defeat,
From her bondage the woman awoke;
She stood up erect, With hands joined in respect,
As the light of his grace on her broke.

All her long stony calm, New-born love did o'erwhelm;
Not a word could she utter, but thrilled
With her blest fortune's crown, At his feet she fell down
And with great streams of joy her eyes filled.

Then made bold by his favour, And love that he gave her,
And as she her Lord recognized,
In a clear thankful voice, She began to rejoice:
"May the Lord known by wisdom, be praised.

"Thou with eyes full of grace, Who dost cleanse our whole race,
"Ravan's foe, by whom o'er life we're borne;
"Joy of all who are human; An unworthy woman,
"To thee for protection I turn.

"Never fate could be worse, Than was mine by the curse
"Of the saint, but I count it a kindness;
"For the vision divine, Loved by Siva, is mine,
"Thou my saviour hast dawned on my blindness.

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"Tho' I'm foolish and weak, But one blessing I seek;
"Of no other, my lord, can I think;
"That my mind nectar sweet, From thy fair lotus feet,
"Like a bee may continu'lly drink;

"Feet from which, the world knows, The divine Ganges flows,
"Feet which Siva upon his head placed,
"Feet which Brahma adores, Those belov'd feet of yours,
"Touching me, all my ills have erased."

Before the Lord falling, And oft on him calling,
Gautama's wife, wholly revived,
Was granted the boon, That she asked for, and soon
In the realm of her husband arrived.

DOHA 209

(Says poor Tulsi Das, Give up foolish deceit
So distressing, and worship this Lord
Supreme, who forever is kindly and gracious,
Whose mercy demands no reward.)

CHAUPAI 216

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

The saint and the princes soon came to the banks
Of the world-cleansing Ganges and rendered their thanks.

Both Rama and Lakshman the river saluted,
And found there delights which their pleasure promoted.

Then Rama to saint Visvamitra low bowed,
And asked of the source whence the sacred stream flowed.

The saint then recounted the story sublime
Of how Ganga¶ came to earth once on a time.

The Lord with the pilgrims then bathed in the river;
The priests many gifts received from him as giver.

Their road they resumed with more friends and good cheer,
And Videha's chief city ere long they drew near.

Both Lakshman and Rama on seeing the city
Rejoiced in a sight so attractive and pretty;

¶ Hindi form of the name Ganges.

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There lakes, wells and streams filled with water like nectar
They saw, with bright stone steps—a shining reflector;

Big bees, all intoxicate, swarmed there in throngs,
And gay-coloured birds all the day sang their songs;

In th' pools coloured lilies were seen in full bloom,
And refreshing cool breezes spread far their perfume.

DOHA 210

On ev'ry side gardens and orchards and groves,
Mind and eye with their beauty arrested;
Some were bright with fresh buds, some with flowers and fruits,
And among them all kinds of birds nested.

CHAUPAI 217

At the task of description the mind is appalled;
Wherever they turned, there the heart was enthralled.

There were beautiful houses and shops with such porches,
That Brahma himself might have set up their arches;

The bankers and tradesmen, all rich as Kuver,¶
Sat by to display and sell all kinds of ware;

Round fine open spaces the city was quartered;
Its streets were well kept, always fragrant and watered;

From temples there sounded sweet musical strains;
Their adorning! The gods must have taken great pains!!

The people were happy in pure, holy living,
Wise, virtuous, faithful in worship and giving.

The marvel of all was King Janak's abode;
It would capture the eye, hold and tire out a god!

At the sight of the fort the mind staggered with wonder,
It seemed it had captured the whole wide world's splendour.

DOHA 211

There the daughter of Janak, fair Sita's apartment
All thought of description frustrates,

¶ God of wealth and prosperity.

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With its white glist'ning walls all so cunningly carved,
Its be-gemmed and adorned golden gates.

CHAUPAI 218

At the doors of the palace, all adamant strong,
Stood bards, minstrels, heralds, a right royal throng;
While always the stables, capacious and cool,
With elephants, chariots and horses were full.
The leaders in army and state, brave and loyal,
Near by had their dwellings like palaces royal.
Outside of the city, by lakes and by springs,
Were set the encampments of visiting kings.
When saint Visvamitra among the big trees
Saw a beautiful mango that promised them ease,
He said to the princes, "Just here, to my mind,
"We should stay; there is no better place we could find."
"It is well, reverend sir," said the Ocean of Grace,
So they planned with the pilgrims to stay in that place.

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

Meanwhile Janak, Mithila's king, had received
The news that the saint and his friends had arrived.

DOHA 212

The king with his ministers, captains and teachers,
His kinsmen, his friends and his priests,
Went gladly to meet the great saint and his comp'ny,
And welcome them all as his guests.

CHAUPAI 219

Head bowed to the ground, he made humble obeisance;
The saint gave his blessing with like glad complaisance;
The rest of the hermits he gave salutation;
His good fortune hailed with sincere gratulation.
The saint in his turn bade the monarch be seated,
And oft of his welfare his question repeated.

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The brothers, from seeing the gardens, returned
Without waiting, when of the king's visit they learned;

One dark, one fair, both of them handsome and young,
They delighted all eyes, o'er all hearts their spell flung.

When Rama came in, they all rose up to greet him,
While saint Visvamitra close by himself sate him.

They all were delighted to see the two brothers;
Eyes filled, bodies thrilled, over them as no others.

At sight of such loveliness, true to his name,
Videha as one "without body" became.¶

DOHA 213

The king, as love welled up within, his emotion
With thoughtfulness hardly repressed,
And bowing his head, with voice breaking, a question
He asked that his feelings expressed:

CHAUPAI 220

"Are these youths a saintly line's gems, reverend sir;
"Or pillars of kingship? Pray, tell who they are.

"Or is it that he called by scripture Unknown
"In the form of these brothers has come to his own?

"My mind that is easily held in restraint,
"Like the moon-watching partridge with gazing is faint;

"And therefore, my master, I ask; tell me truly;
"I pray you withhold nothing from me unduly.

"When I look at them, from emotion's release
"My mind is disturbed from its heavenly peace."

The saint smiling answered, "O king, 'tis well spoken;
"Your word is the boundless truth by ev'ry token;

"To every creature these brothers are dear,
(Young Rama smiled inwardly these words to hear.)

¶ A play on Videha, name of Janak's kingdom and so of its king, meaning "unbodied."

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"They're jewels of Raghu's line, King Dasrath's sons;
"To help me he sent them; so true their love runs.

DOHA 214

"They're brothers devoted, named Rama and Lakshman,
"Supreme in strength, goodness and fitness;
"They conquered the demons and saved my oblation;
"Of this the whole world is their witness."

CHAUPAI 221

Said the king, "Rev'rend sir, since your vision I've seen,
"It's proof that my good deeds effective have been;
"Joy is added to joy at the sight of this pair,
"One in beauty, yet diff'rent, one dark and one fair;
"My soul is delighted and blest with the charm
"Of their love for each other, so wholesome and warm;
"I tell you, my lord, it is like the attachment
"Of Brahma and Soul, surely found in detachment."

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

Again and again, more elated and dazed
With emotion, the monarch at Lord Rama gazed;
Then bowing, and praising the saint for the thought,
In the city to lodge them as guests the king brought.
To a beautiful dwelling he took them to stay
That was pleasant at all times, by night and by day;
At last, having rendered all possible aid,
He bade them farewell and his way homeward made.

DOHA 215

When Rama had taken his food with the hermits,
And rested with them for a while,
With one watch to nightfall, he sat by his brother,
With him those three hours to beguile.

CHAUPAI 222

Now Lakshman was restless, at heart he desired
To visit the city before they retired;

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Yet out of respect for the saint and his brother,
He smiled and endeavoured his longing to smother.

But Rama could well read the thoughts of the younger,
And brotherly love welled up fuller and stronger;

With bright quiet smile and respectfully meek,
He asked of his master permission to speak;

He said, "Lakshman wishes the city to see,
"But respectfully will not tell you, sir, nor me;

"If you will permit us, 'twill be a great boon,
"I will show him all; then bring him back very soon."

Said the saint, as he heard these words full of affection,
"You do all things well, Rama, all to perfection;

"Supporting the bridge of religion, my son,
"You lovingly do good to each faithful one.

DOHA 216

"Go brothers, the pair of you, go see the city,
"You two in whom dwells joy's full treasure;
"Go, show your fair selves to the city's dear people,
"To eyes and to hearts give this pleasure."

CHAUPAI 223

These brothers, to all men of gladness the essence,
Bowed low at the saint's feet and thus left his presence.

At sight of their beauty, on every hand
Young eager folks followed them, band upon band;

With bright yellow cloth their young bodies enfolding,
Hung quivers, hands gracefully bow and shaft holding;

Well matching their colour their sandal-wood mark,
A ravishing couple, one fair and one dark;

With arms long and powerful, lion-like shoulders,
And fine large pearl necklace, a joy to beholders;

The beauty of graceful ears, lotus-like eyes,
And of bright moon-like face, all three fevers defies;

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Their fine costly ear-rings of flowers of gold
The hearts quickly capture of all who behold;
Bright glances, curved eyebrows, and clear royal sign,
On their forehead—the stamp they of glory divine;

DOHA 217

The hair of their handsome young heads black and curly;
Caps set there attractive and smart;
From head to foot glori'us indeed were the brothers,
And winsome to every heart.

CHAUPAI 224

When the folks of the city receive the glad news
Of the princes' arrival, off ev'ry one goes;
They all leave their bus'ness in home, shop or warehouse,
And run off, like beggars to pillage a storehouse;
Then seeing the brothers their eyes are rewarded,
Those two in whom all beauty's treasure is hoarded.
The girls peeped thro' windows, excitedly clamoured,
To see the two lads and at once fell enamoured;
They lovingly said to each other, "Young Rama's
"Great charm, my dear, beats that of thousands of Kamas;
"The fame of such beauty was ne'er heard among
"Divinities, demons, saints, men—old or young;
"Not four-armed Vishnu, nor Brahma four-headed,
"Nor Siva five-faced with garb monstrous and dreaded,
"And no other god in the whole universe
"Has fine handsome beauty the equal of theirs.

DOHA 218

"The dark and the fair, both are beauty and glory
"Incarnate, yet tender in age;
"To equal the charm of one limb would the pow'rs
"Of a myriad Love-gods engage.

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

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CHAUPAI 225

"Come tell me, my dear, was there ever a soul
"Who could gaze on such forms and yet still be heart-whole?"

Said one to the rest, in tones soft and endearing,
"I'll tell if you'll listen what I have been hearing:

"These two, as devoted and fair as young swans,
"Are said to be both of them King Dasrath's sons;

"By killing unconq'rable demons they served
"The saint Visvamitra, his off'ring preserved;

"The one dark-complexioned and bright lotus-eyed
"Marich and Subahu subdued in their pride;

"His mother is Kausalya, Rama he's named;
"Delightsome, for skill with the bow he is famed,

"The one foll'wing after in ev'ry direction,
"His bow in his hand, well-clad, fair of complexion,

"Is Lakshman; he's Rama's belov'd younger brother;
"Sumitra, my dear, is the name of his mother.

DOHA 219

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

"Having served Visvamitra, these two on the way
"The wife of Gautama revived;
"They're here for the bow-sacrifice and the trial."
From this all the girls joy derived.

CHAUPAI 226

Said one, seeing Rama, "A husband is here
"Well worthy the daughter of Janak, my dear;

"If once the king sees him, his purpose he'll carry,
"His vow put aside and arrange that they marry."

Another said, "Surely King Janak has known him,
"For honour as guest with the saint he has shown him;

"From such a vow Janak will never desist;
"Fate's victim, he'll still in his folly persist."

"That's so," said a third, "but if Providence kind
"Is true to what's told us, good deeds their fruit find;

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"So Sita will surely to this youth be married;
"By doubts of this, sister, no need to be harried;

"If this union, by kindly fate, comes to pass,
"The joy we shall share will all others surpass;

"One thing makes me long for this union yet more;
"We'll see him again, he will come as before.

DOHA 220

"If this does not happen, I tell you, my dears,
"All hope of this vision is vain;
"By nothing but virtue and striving in many
"A birth can we see him again."

CHAUPAI 227

At this yet another said, "That is the truth;
"This wedding will bring good to all men, forsooth."

Said one, "Siva's bow is a hard one to bend,
"And this dark youth is delicate-looking, my friend;

"In that lies our trouble, I doubt for that reason."
Then one more maid spoke a soft word in good season:

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

"My dears, I have heard this thing said time and oft,
"That they're mighty in strength, tho' they seem young and soft;

"If the sinful Ahalya was saved by the touch
"Of the dust of his feet—If his power is such,

"Then be sure he'll not rest till he's broken the bow;
"Hold on to this faith, such weak doubts never show;

"The Lord who made Sita and to this hour led her,
"Of purpose made this dark youth also to wed her."

Their hearts were uplifted by what this maid said,
And they softly replied, "May it be so indeed."

DOHA 221

These bevies of fair, bright-eyed girls scattered flowers,
With joy that their hearts scarce contained;
Wherever the brothers were seen as they wandered,
There rapturous gladness obtained.

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CHAUPAI 228

The brothers went on to the town's eastern ward,
Where a place for the Trial of the Bow was prepared.

An altar extensive and fine had been made
And adorned, on a slope where a pavement was laid;

Around was a fine golden platform to seat
The kings who in tourney had come to compete;

Close by and behind this, the seats were erected
For guests who to witness the Trial were expected;

And galleries yet higher still were completed,
Where th' men and the boys of the town would be seated;

Near these was a platform, large, glistening white,
With bright coloured curtains, a beautiful sight,

A place where the ladies in comfort might sit
To watch the display, as by rank might be fit.

The children accomp'nied the princes around
And chattered politely of all that they found.

DOHA 222

The youngsters again and again touched their bodies,
And made many loving excuses;
They thrilled with their joy as they looked at the brothers,
And showed it by bright loving ruses.

CHAUPAI 229

Each child, seeing Rama, was won by love's spell,
And himself of each building in view tried to tell;

Each one called the brothers where his fancy drew him;
They answered each one in their love and went to him;

Each place that the eager young folk told about,
Rama quietly to Lakshman then pointed out;

'Tis strange that the One by whose word in an instant
The pow'r of Illusion made all things existent,

Should show in these Bow-Trial buildings so fervent
And frank interest for the sake of a servant.

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The sights having seen, they returned to their master;
Because of their lateness their steps moved the faster;

A strange thing again—He whose fear frightens fear
Is afraid to offend where he ought to revere.

Then with words kind and tender, in answer to "Why?"
They bade the reluctant young people good-bye.

DOHA 223

They came to their teacher and showed hesitation,
With loving and rev'rent submission;
They bowed at his feet humbly, asked his forgiveness,
And sat when he gave them permission.

CHAUPAI 230

At nightfall the saint gave the word and prepared
For the worship of ev'ning in which they all shared.

Till midnight, in telling things sacred and aged
Thro' two happy watches they gladly engaged.

When th' saint sought his bed, the two brothers sat by it
And rubbed his feet softly to give ease and quiet;

The ones for a sight of whose feet fair and holy,
To rigorous worship men give themselves wholly,

These two brothers, honoured by every creature,
Here lovingly massaged the feet of their teacher.

Then Rama, his master's command to obey,
Lay down to rest also, and as there he lay,

His young brother lovingly, softly began
To rub his dear feet—honour sacred to man.

At last, at his brother's repeated request,
Young Lakshman slept too, Rama's feet on his breast.

DOHA 224

When night had passed, Lakshman awoke at the call
Of the morning, when first the cock crows;
And next, ere his master awakened, Lord Rama,
The monarch of all things, arose.

RAMA AND LAKSHMAN IN JANAKPUR

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CHAUPAI 231

They bathed and fulfilled all the body's requirement,
And then sought the saint in his morning retirement,
Gave rev'rent salute, and obtaining consent,
To gather some flowers for worship they went.
A beautiful garden—'twas owned by the king—
They saw, where 'twas always perpetual spring;
There many a beautiful tree spread its arms,
And vines vari-coloured displayed all their charms;
They saw handsome flowers, fine fruits and new buds
More abundant than trees in the Garden of Gods;
Calls of doves, cuckoos, parrots and pheasants enhanced
The beauty, 'mid which gorge'us-hued peacocks danced;
In th' midst was a lake, up to which led the fairways,
With flights of well-made and gem-studded stone stairways;
Bright many-hued lotuses lay on the water,
Where water-birds played, bees were always a-flutter.

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

DOHA 225

Lord Rama and Lakshman were charmed with the garden
And lake; a delightful pleasance
Indeed must be that which could give him such ease,
And whose charm could the Lord so entrance.

CHAUPAI 232

They looked all around; then, allowed by the keepers,
They plucked leaves and flowers from trees and from creepers.
Just then Sita's mother sent her to the garden
To worship Parvati, her goddess and warden;
She came with her maids singing songs; none was homely,
But all of them well-favoured, discreet and comely.
Just close by the lake was a beautiful shrine,
To Parvati sacred, unspeakably fine.

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They bathed in the lake, after which Sita entered
The shrine, mind uplifted and on worship centered;

Her heart warm with longing, the fair royal maid
For a good worthy husband devotedly prayed.

One maiden had strayed from the others meanwhile,
To look at the garden and time to beguile;

She saw as she wandered the two princely brothers.
And smitten with love quickly ran to the others.

DOHA 226

They saw her condition, her body a-thrill,
Tears of joy in her eyes, mind excited,
And asked her in gentle tones, "Tell us, dear friend,
"What such rapturous joy has incited."

CHAUPAI 233

"In the garden I wandered and looked," she replied;
"On a sudden there two handsome youths I espied;

"One dark and one fair; could I tell you, I might,
"But my eyes have no tongue and my tongue has no sight."

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

They all showed their joy as around they came thronging,
And, seeing in Sita's sweet face her great longing,

One said, "These are surely, I give you my word,
"The princes who came with the saint, as we heard;

"Their beauty wins hearts ev'rywhere, 'tis related;
"The townsmen and women are all fascinated;

"They're talking of naught but their beauty, I'm told;
"Let's all go and see them, a sight to behold."

All welcomed these words; Sita chiefly was pleased;
Her eyes for a sight of the youths her mind teased.

She went to the spot, that maid going before;
None knew that her love was an old love of yore.

DOHA 227

With pure love increasing, the words she recalled
Of saint Narad in years past and gone;

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Astonished, she cast anxious eyes here and there,
Like a startled and restless young fawn.

CHAUPAI 234

At the sound of the tinkling of anklet and bangle,
Said Rama to Lakshman, as thoughts 'gan to mingle,

"I hear sounds that seem 'tis the Love-god who comes,
"With world-conquering cymbals and beating of drums."

Like the moon and the pheasant, his eyes in a twinkling
To Sita were drawn when he looked t'ward the tinkling;

His restless eyes gave up their wand'ring and blinking,
As tho' from the lids Nimi fled, god of winking.

He gazed at her loveliness, inwardly hailed
And rejoiced in her glory, but utterance failed;

It seemed the Creator had shown all his pow'r,
After making the worlds, in one marvellous dow'r.

To beautify beauty, it seemed; or as flame
In the lamp crowning glory's own palace, she came.

All poesy's figures are vain, I confess,
And unworthy to tell of Videha's princess.

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

DOHA 228

The Lord in his heart on her loveliness dwelt,
What it meant to himself, too, well-witting;
And then to his brother he spoke with pure mind
These words the occasion befitting:

CHAUPAI 235

"My brother, this maiden is King Janak's daughter;
"For her the Bow-Trial, and for those who've sought her;

"To worship their goddess she's come with her maids,
"Now her light as she wanders here all things pervades;

"The sight of her beauty, pure, artless and glori'us,
"Has smitten me deep, o'er my heart 'tis victori'us;

"The reason for this only Providence knows;
"But my right side with auspicious signs throbs and glows.

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"'Tis nat'ral to those of Raghu's kingly race
"That their feet in ways evil they never will place;

"So, here's my assurance for bliss in this life—
"I never have looked on another man's wife.

"Too rare are such men, in this world there's a lack
"Of those who on foeman have ne'er turned their back,

"Who on married woman ne'er cast lustful look,
"And never the cry of the needy forsook."

DOHA 229

While speaking to Lakshman, his mind all the while
Of the fair form of Sita was thinking,
As tho' 'twere a bee of the nectar-like charm
Of her lotus-face thirstily drinking.

CHAUPAI 236

Meanwhile Sita also looked eagerly round,
To see where the heart-stealing youths might be found;

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Her fawn-like eyes where'er she looked cast a spell,
As tho' on the spot a bright lotus-shower fell.

Her maids pointed out, by a vine partly screened,
The handsome young princes, one fair-, one dark-skinned,

As soon as she saw him, with ardent desire,
Like one finding treasure, her heart was on fire;

She gazed at his face, till her eyelids forgot
To rest with a blink, eyes held fast to one spot;

Her body grew faint, by love's longing o'ercome,
As the partridge to cool autumn's moon must succumb;

By eye-gate she took Rama home to her heart,
Then closed lid-door on him—a womanly art.

Her maids saw her held fast in love's firm attachment,
But naught could they say in their quiet abashment.

DOHA 230

Just then the two youths, coming out from the shade
Of the vine, themselves openly showed;

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It seemed that two brilliant full moons had emerged
From the veil of a dark riven cloud.

CHAUPAI 237

"Two braves, young and handsome, thus come into view,
"Like two gorgeous lilies, one yellow, one blue;
"Hair parted and glossy like black raven's wing,
"To which bright fresh blossoms an added charm bring;
"On each brow a caste-mark and bright beads of sweat;
"In each ear gem-ornaments gracefully set;
"With black arching eyebrows, curls cov'ring the head
"And eyes like the fresh lotus bloom bright and red.
"Attractive and graceful their chin, nose and cheeks,
"And smiles as of one who from all goodwill seeks;
"Description is vain, tho' all arts here I lavish;
"Such loveliness ten thousand Love-gods would ravish;
"Gem-garlands hang down from throats shell-like in grace;
"Strong elephant-trunk arms to fight or embrace.
"My dear, as those flow'rs in their left hand they carry,
"The dark one's most handsome and worthy to marry."

DOHA 231

While watching these lion-like forms clad in yellow,
The gems of the whole Solar host,
The treas'ries of handsomeness, glory and virtue,
The maids all self-consciousness lost.

CHAUPAI 238

To Sita one maiden turned, courage she rallied,
And said to her, taking her hand as they dallied,
"To think of Parvati you'll have many chances;
"Come, open your eyes; why not look at the princes?"
Then Sita with modesty looked up again,
And saw just before her the young princely twain.

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As on handsome Rama she turned a full look,
The thought of her father's vow scarce could she brook.¶

Her maids, when they saw her now under the sway
Of the prince, said, "Let's go, for we fear to delay."

With a smile and a hint that the others could borrow,
Said one, "We'll come here at the same time tomorrow."

As at this secret hint Sita bashfully blushed,
Thoughts of mother displeased at delay all else crushed;

She bravely went off, Rama shrined in her breast,
Well knowing her fate with her father would rest.

DOHA 232

She often turned round as she went, and to look
At a deer, bird, or tree made pretence;
As thus of her Rama she caught frequent glimpses,
It made her love grow more intense.

CHAUPAI 239

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Thoughts of Siva's dread bow now her faint heart appalled,
But Lord Rama's form in her heart she installed.

Meanwhile Rama saw that dear Sita was going,
The fount whence all love, joy and beauty were flowing;

With love as the ink her fair picture he traced
On the walls of his heart, there indelibly placed.

Again into Parvati's shrine Sita entered,
Hands clasped, lowly bowed, joyous praises she ventured:

"All hail to thee, Mountain-king's Daughter, all hail!
"As partridge to moon drawn to Siva, thrice hail!

"From whom Kartikeya and Ganesh were born;
"World-mother, with lightning-like form, bright as morn;

"No end, no beginning, but infinite Thou;
"Whose might scriptures cannot explain, but avow;

"Thou all things begetting, sustaining, destroying
"By illusive power, thine own ways enjoying.

¶ That she should wed the one who could bend Siva's bow,

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DOHA 233

"Among faithful wives and true women thy name
"Is rightfully known as supreme;
"A thousand divine voices never could tell
"Of thy glory beyond all extreme.

CHAUPAI 240

"Who serves thee soon finds ev'ry good gift of life,
"For thou art the giver, thou Siva's dear wife;

"Men, saints and gods too with all joys are replete,
"As they worship, O goddess, thy lotus-like feet.

"Thou knowest the hope in my heart now upwelling,
"For th' hearts of all creatures thou makest thy dwelling;

"For this cause my longing in words I've not told."
Vaidehi¶ on Parvati's feet then laid hold.

Parvati was won by this warm, sincere love;
A wreath fell; the image smiled down from above;

This gift Sita clasped to her breast, grace-bestowed;
The goddess replied as her joy overflowed:

"Hear, Sita; my blessing is always effectu'l;
"Your longing will soon be fulfilled and made actu'l.

"Saint Narad says truth and can never be flouted;
The husband you want will be yours, 'tis undoubted.

CHHAND 23

"The young prince dark-formed, Toward whom your heart warmed,
"As your husband you surely will win;
"For your love he will own, 'Tis to Rama well-known,
"Wholly good, fount where mercies begin."

Thus with Parvati's blessing, Her goodness confessing,
Glad Sita went home with her friends.
Says Tulsi, Her praises, To Gauri† she raises,
Thus Sita her way homeward wends.

¶ A name of Sita as daughter of Videha's king.
† Another name of Parvati or Bhawani.

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SORATHA 24

Her joy all description defied,
For well now she knew she had Parvati's favour;
With auspicious signs her left side,¶
Of bliss her assurance, began to throb gently.

CHAUPAI 241

The brothers returned to their teacher, the saint,
And praised Sita's beautiful charms as they went.

To the saint Rama told what had happened meanwhile,
For his nature was frank, not the least trace of guile.

The saint took the flowers and in worship used them,
Then blessed both the youths as with hope he enthused them;

"Your purpose," he said, "you will soon realise."
Their joy as they heard this they could not disguise.

The wise, learned hermit, his meal having ate,
Some old sacred stories began to relate.

RAMA AND SITA: LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

In this way the day for the brothers went faster;
They joined ev'ning pray'rs at the word of their master.

They saw the full moon rising bright in the east;
It recalled Sita's face and their gladness increased;

But Rama reflected, "This moon, tho' 'tis fair,
"Cannot with the sweet face of Sita compare;

DOHA 234

"The moon Ocean-born, whence comes Poison her brother,
"By day is so dim and obscure;
"How can one compare with the face of fair Sita
"A thing so defective and poor?

CHAUPAI 242

"She waxes and wanes, gives the parted sad hours;
"She's the one the eclipse-demon sometimes devours;

¶ The left is auspicious for women.

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"She distresses the birds, is the foe of the lily;
"So faulty! To praise her as perfect is silly!
"A man would be wrong and unworthily daring,
"With Vaidehi's face such an object comparing."
They talked long of Sita; their excuse—the moon!
Then went to the saint; night had come all too soon!
They bowed as they paid sincere rev'rence and deep;
Then with his permission they sought rest and sleep.
When night had passed Lord Raghunayak¶ awoke,
And seeing his brother asleep, thus he spoke;
"My brother, awake! See the morning arise
"To rouse birds and flowers, and gladden all eyes."
Then Lakshman with hands folded homage accorded,
And answered with words that the Lord's pow'r recorded:

DOHA 235

"At th' coming of dawn the night-lily has faded,
"The stars all their brightness have hidden;
"So, when of your coming they heard, the kings fainted
"Who to the Bow-Trial were bidden.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

CHAUPAI 243

"As stars in the night-sky those kings may be flattered;
"The bow, like the dark, ne'er by them can be shattered;
"As birds, flowers, insects and beasts with one voice
"And one heart at the passing of darkness rejoice,
"So Lord, when by your hands that dread bow is broken,
"'Twill gladden your servants by every token;
"The rising sun easily scatters the night,
"Disperses the stars, to the whole world gives light;
"This sunrise, my lord, makes more clear in a figure
"To these star-like princes your glorious vigour;

¶ Another form for Raghurai.

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"Your arms are the sun's path whence over the land
"Glory dawns; 'twas for this the Bow-breaking was planned."
Rama smiled at these words—eager, loving and warm;
Then bathed and morn's duties began to perform.
He went to his master when these were completed
And bowed low before him there thoughtfully seated.
Then King Janak sent Satanand, his adviser,
To saint Visvamitra—than these two none wiser;
The king's message asked that they all come to view
The Bow-Trial; the saint sent and called for the two.

DOHA 236

They came; Rama paid Satanand humble homage,
And then by his master he sat;
The saint said, "My sons, you may go to the tourney,
"King Janak has called you for that.

CHAUPAI 244

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

"Go, see now whom Sita as husband will choose,
"Whom heaven with honour will bless, whom refuse."
Said Lakshman, "My master, that one will receive
"The honour to whom you your blessing will give."
The saints all rejoiced at these words faith-confessing,
And all of them gave the two brothers their blessing.
Then Rama set out with the saints on his journey,
To go to the place of the coming Bow-Tourney.
As soon as the brothers arrived there, the word
Of their coming spread quickly; the citizens heard
And all left their duties; off quickly they ran,
The child, youth and aged, ev'ry woman and man.
When King Janak saw the place thronged to the borders,
He called trusted servants and gave them these orders;
"Go quickly and give to the people your aid,
"Seat them all, to each one let due honour be paid,"

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DOHA 237

They led to their seats ev'ry person with gestures
And tones kindly, courte'us and frank;
From highest to lowest they gave worthy places,
To each in accord with his rank.

CHAUPAI 245

The two brother princes arrived at that moment;
They seemed to be Beauty's embodied endowment,

The ocean of virtue, heroic discreetness,
The dark and fair essence of all gracious sweetness;

In that princely gath'ring they shone with resplendence
Like two bright full moons with the stars in attendance.

Each person who saw them to see was inclined
In them what agreed with his temper and mind;

To valorous princes, distinguished in battle,
They seemed incarnations of war's pride and mettle;

Before them the tyrannous despot-kings trembled,
To whom living fearfulness these two resembled;

To demons there came the appalling perception
Of Rama as death to their king-like deception;

The men of the city with good common sanity
Saw gems of perfect delightsome humanity.

DOHA 238

Each woman saw in them with joy what she chiefly
Desired and at heart adulated;
As tho' all that gives true adornment and charm
And wins love was in them incarnated.

CHAUPAI 246

The learned saw Rama divine and majestic,
With many heads, limbs, eyes and bodies fantastic.

And by Janak's household—Say! How was he seen?
As a kinsman, their own much beloved, I ween;

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With Janak, her husband, the queen looked upon
The Lord with unspeakable love as her son.

The mystics saw in him the supernal essence;
The saints saw the fount of true light and quiescence;

To those who for godly devotion were noted,
These two were the god to which each was devoted.

While Sita found boundless love, gladness and peace,
In looking again on her dear Rama's face;

If she could not tell her heart's joy, tho' she knew it,
How can it be told by the tongue of a poet?

Whatever the spirit of each one might be,
'Twas thus he was given Lord Rama to see.

DOHA 239

The princes of Koshala royally outshone
That gathering kingly and vast;
The eyes of all worlds were allured by their charm,
Dark and fair—a most winsome contrast.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

CHAUPAI 247

In these two all Nature's charms centred supremely;
Compared with them countless Love-gods were unseemly;

Their faces would shame e'en the bright moon of autumn,
Their lotus-eyes ravish the heart to its bottom;

Their glance would defy Passion's lord proud and handsome,
Would capture all minds, so unspeakably winsome;

Their ears hung with jewels; their fair rounded cheeks;
Their fine chin and lips; voice that aye kindly speaks;

Their eyebrows and nose finely shaped; and a tender
Bright smile that would outshine the moon in full splendour;

Their broad manly foreheads with clear princely mark,
Where hang like bee-swarms curls of hair thick and dark;

Their bright yellow head-dress in which, here and there,
Appear buds of flowers adorning their hair;

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Their neck and throat shell-like, with exquisite lines,
Send thought far beyond worldly pleasure's confines;

DOHA 240

With a necklet of elephant-pearls, and low hanging
A garland of sweet *tulsi* flowers;
Strong arms, bull-like shoulders, and lion-like gait;
In them mightiness shows all its powers.

CHAUPAI 248

By their side hangs a quiver; loins bound in cloth yellow;
Bow slung on left shoulder, in right hand an arrow;

On each graceful hangs a gold-hued sacred thread;
Glory's living form they, from their feet to their head.

The people who saw them shared gladness unmixed;
They would not move on, but stood gazing transfixed.

The king saw them also with joy unalloyed;
Bowed low to the saint; the occasion employed

To tell the whole story and ask benediction;
To see all then took them in ev'ry direction.

Wherever he led them, the handsome young princes
Drew to themselves wond'ring, affectionate glances.

In Rama each saw what himself most admired,
But no one to curious questions was fired.

The hermits said, "Royal sir, all's well arranged."
The joy of the king to yet higher heights ranged.

DOHA 241

One dais and seat there was, more than all others
Luxuri'us, attractive and spacious;
The hermit and princes were led by the king
And there seated with gestures most gracious.

CHAUPAI 249

The guest-kings, when Rama they saw, were despondent,
As stars faint and fade when the moon is ascendant;

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They well knew that Rama, without any doubt,
Would break the huge bow and his rivals thus rout;

E'en tho' he should finally not break the bow,
Sita on him alone would the garland bestow.

With these thoughts some said, "Let's go back whence we came,"
Thus losing all strength, honour, prowess and fame;

But others at such weakness mockingly laughed,
Those given to ignorant pride, force and craft:

"Hard the bow-breaking task to which Janak has led us;
"Unbroken—he says, Sita never shall wed us;

"What then? Tho' the death-demon himself confront us,
"For Sita we'll conquer him; none shall affront us."

But others there were—pious, humble, discreet,
Who inwardly smiled at such foolish conceit.

SORATHA 25

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

"Proud suitors will all be discomfited,
"For Sita will surely wed Rama," they said;
"Resisting him none will be profited,
"For none can defeat Dasrath's two valiant sons.

CHAUPAI 250

"Why chatter such trash and commit suicide?
"Imagined sweets hunger have ne'er satisfied.

"Give heed to our warning, most solemn and seri'us;
"World-mother is Sita, however mysteri'us;

"And Rama's world-father; in this now believe,
"And the chief joy of life, their dear vision, achieve.

"These brothers, in Lord Siva's heart ever living,
"Are virtuous, beautiful, always joy-giving.

"Why run from the nectar-like heavenly ocean,
"To seek a mirage or a death-dealing potion?

"But each one must follow the way that he wishes;
"Today we are finding here this life's true riches."

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The good kings, with these words, in glad adoration
To those wondrous forms gave devout contemplation.

The gods in their cars to this sight their way wended,
Rained flow'rs from above and glad tones in song blended.

DOHA 242

All things were now ready, so King Janak sent
To call Sita, who—ever obedient—
Came in with her maids all accomplished and fair,
Herself of them all the most radiant.

CHAUPAI 251

None ever can hope Sita's charm to define,
The mother of worlds, of all fair things the mine.

To me ev'ry figure of speech is unworthy,
As used for all women—the common and earthy.

That poet himself and his skill would deride
Who with Sita's beauty comparison tried.

Say, where could one hope such a woman to find,
To liken to Sita, if so one's inclined?

Or goddesses? Parvati's lame; Sarasvati
Just talks; for her spouse always mournful is Rati;

And Lakshmi's the sister of strong drink and poison;
None equal to Sita is on our horizon.

¶Tho' Beauty should be the Milk-ocean for churning,
And Grace be the tortoise-like pivot for turning,

And Glory the rope, Charm the mountain-like rod
To be turned by the hand of the winsome Love-god;

DOHA 243

Tho' Lakshmi be born in this way and from these,
That in her charm and pleasure might centre;

¶ This refers to the legend of the churning of the sea of nectar-like milk, which gave birth to Lakshmi.

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As equal to Sita, or like her in beauty,
No poet would dare to present her.

CHAUPAI 252

The modest maids entered the hall, Sita bringing,
And soul-stirring songs in sublime voices singing;

Her young body swathed in a beautiful robe,
The world-mother's beauty no rival could probe;

Rich ornaments, set by her maids in the places
Most fitting, enhanced and set off all her graces.

The moment that Sita set foot in the hall,
The sight drew the gaze and the hearts won of all;

The gods beat their drums, songs were sung by heav'n's choirs,
Flowers fell, as they vented their joyful desires.

The beautiful garland of vict'ry she held;
The kings were agape at the sight they beheld.

For Rama she cast her eyes eagerly round;
The kings were all smitten with love's deadly wound;

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

When she, near the saint, the two brothers descried,
Her eyes were held, as one who treasure espied.

DOHA 244

At sight of revered ones and such a great throng,
Modest Sita in bashfulness shrank
From their eyes, turned her gaze to her maids, but the nectar
Of Rama's fair form her soul drank.

CHAUPAI 253

While the beauty of Sita and Rama thus beckoned,
The people could not close their eyes for a second;

They all hesitated to say what they thought,
But at heart each one prayed and from God this boon sought:

"O Lord, from his folly turn Janak so blinded,
"Give him too our thought, make him with us like-minded;

"To turn from his thoughtless vow give the king courage;
"Let Sita be given to Rama in marriage;

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"'Twill mean the world's good, seem to all the right policy;
"Obstinate ways must at last kindle jealousy;

"All in their hearts this one wish and thought carry,
"This dark youth is worthy with Sita to marry."

The king called his heralds and bade them proclaim
His family dignity, descent and name;

This done he commanded them tell of his oath;
They gladly obeyed him at once, nothing loth.

DOHA 245

The heralds cried loudly, "Give ear, all ye kings
"Who are willing (there's none to compel you);
"With strong arms uplifted as witness to heaven,
"Of Videha's oath now we tell you.

CHAUPAI 254

"If the strength of your arms be the moon, Siva's bow
"Is the dread mighty demon-eclipse, as all know.

"Both Ravan and Bana at this took one look,
"Mighty braves, off they went and the challenge forsook.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

"Of Siva's great beam this the word—you may take it
"Or leave it—whoever can lift it and break it

"Will win with world-honour fair Sita today,
"She will make him her husband at once—no delay."

On hearing the vow, in the vast kingly crowd
Were some who were furious, eager and proud;

They girded their loins, each one called on his deity,
Quickly went up (sensing no incongruity),

Strained flushed of face, strained again as they panted;
But none moved the bow, none could do as he wanted.

Far from it those stayed who were heedful of fitness,
Nor shared in the folly which there they could witness.

DOHA 246

Those foolish kings strained at the bow, and they tugged,
Then retired in confusion; none stirred it;

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It seemed to gain strength like a warrior's arm,
And more weight—'twas their efforts conferred it.

CHAUPAI 255

Then ten thousand kings in united attempt
Tried to lift it, but met with defeat and contempt;

Tho' they all tried their best, the bow could not be moved,
As true wives, deaf to lust, hold to husbands belov'd;

The kings seemed as foolish in failure and dudgeon,
As monks with no faith, no restraint, no religion;

The glory, prowess and renown of the mighty
Were scattered by Siva's great bow strong and weighty;

Their hearts sank within, shame spread over their faces;
They sullenly turned and went back to their places.

King Janak cried out when he saw their condition,
In words that showed anger and great agitation:

"Great kings, having heard of the oath that I swore,
"From many a kingdom have come here; yea, more—

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

"Many demons and gods in man's guise have appeared,
"Great warriors too in this gath'ring have shared;

DOHA 247

"The maiden is comely, the victory great,
"And the honour—could any be greater?
"But it seems none to win them by breaking the bow
"Has been made by our Lord and Creator.

CHAUPAI 256

"Say who is displeased, or despises the guerdon,
"That none could succeed as he tackled the burden?

"Why say none to string it or break it is found?
"Not one even lifted the bow from the ground!

"Let no one be angry, or boast of his worth;
"I know—there's no manly man left now on earth!

"Give up and go home, here no more need you tarry;
"'Tis plain Sita's fortune is not that she marry.

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"All merit would go if I gave up my vow.
"The maid stays a maid. Say! What else can I do?
"Had I known in this world no more heroes remain,
"I'd not now be a joke; from such vow I'd refrain."

As they heard Janak's words, all the folks gathered there
Looked at Janki¶ with eyes filled with grief and despair.
But Lakshman was angry; he lifted his brows,
Lips quivered, eyes reddened and flashed as wrath rose.

DOHA 248

For fear of his brother he could not speak out,
Tho' Janak's words pierced like a dart;
But, bowing at Rama's feet and with a voice
Well-restrained, he unburdened his heart:

CHAUPAI 257

"To utter such nonsense let none ever dare
"Among men, if of Raghu's line one man is there!
"Such things as King Janak has said before him
"Who is Raghu's bright star, 'gainst whom all else is dim!
"Thou sun to the lotus of Raghu's great race,
"I speak simple truth, not with bold, brazen face;
"If you will but give me your royal command,
"I'll lift the whole world like a ball in one hand;
"I'll toss it and break it—a mere earthen pot!
"Mount Meru I'll wring like a herb from the spot!
"Compared with your glory, which nothing could stifle,
"What is this old bow? But a mere helpless trifle!
"I'll show these poor weaklings, if you give the word,
"A game they've not played, never seen, never heard;
"This bow I will bend like a soft lotus stalk
"And a hundred leagues run with it! Run, mark, not walk!

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

¶ Sita, as Janak's daughter.

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DOHA 249

"I'll break it, my lord, like a soft mushroom stalk,
"With the help of your prowess and pow'r;
"If not, by your fair feet I swear, I'll not take
"Bow again in my hand from this hour."

CHAUPAI 258

As Lakshman these burning words angrily uttered,
Earth shook and its elephant bearers all tottered;

The people and kings were all fearful and hushed;
Sita's heart swelled with joy, but in shame Janak blushed.

The hermits, the saint and Lord Rama, delighted,
Again and again were all thrilled and excited.

Then Rama with signs bade his brother refrain,
And lovingly called him to sit down again.

The saint Visvamitra then, judging the time
To be ripe, said in tones full of love and sublime,

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

"Rise, Rama, let Lord Siva's bow now be shattered,
"And Janak's affliction forever be scattered."

At the words of the saint, Rama rose from his seat,
Without sorrow or joy, calmly bowed at his feet,

And then moved with a gait graceful, wholly at ease,
That would shame a young lion and onlookers please.

DOHA 250

As Rama ascended the stage, it was like
The young sun rising o'er eastern mountains;
The hearts of the saints opened up lotus-like,
Eyes like bees drank from nectar-full fountains.

CHAUPAI 259

The hopes of the kings were all scattered as night,
Their vaunting words vanished like stars in daylight;

The proud kings drew in their pride like fading lilies;
The false kings shrank back from the light—owl-like sillies!

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Like birds at dawn, those in the heavens, rejoicing,
Rained flowers of joy, their own homage thus voicing.

To th' saint Rama bowed in devoted submission,
Then turned to the hermits and asked their permission.

He, lord of all things, went in masterly fashion,
As moves a strong elephant urged by love's passion.

As Rama went forward, the people were thrilled
In body; unspeakable joy each heart filled;

They prayed gods and ancestors, "If for our needs
"Any virtue remains for us from our good deeds,

"Then grant, Lord Ganesh, that our Rama may break
"Siva's bow like a lotus stem tender and weak."

DOHA 251

As Rama went forward, the mother of Sita
Looked hard, and her maidens called to her;
Then said with a voice that revealed all her love,
And as deep anxious longing passed thro' her:

CHAUPAI 260

"My dears, there are many who say they're our friends
"Among those watching now to see what this portends;

"But not one to tell the king plainly will dare
"That so stubborn to be with these youths is not fair.

"When Ravan and Bana would not touch the bow,
"And the pride of the kings who essayed was brought low,

"Can the bow by young princes like these e'er be shifted?
"By cygnets could Mount Meru ever be lifted?

"Mad is the king, with demands so unsuitable;
"But, my dears, God's ways are always inscrutable."

Then a bright maid in sweet tones made reply,
"The glori'us, O queen, one should never decry.

"Could Agastya the saint with the sea be compared?
"Yet he drained it all dry, as the whole world has heard.

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"The orb of the sun is so small to our sight,
"Yet it scatters from all worlds the darkness of night.

DOHA 252

"Brahma, Vishnu and Siva and all other gods
"In its pow'r a small word-charm can hold;
"And a monstrous great elephant, lord of the woods,
"By a sharp stumpy goad is controlled.

CHAUPAI 261

"The arrows and bow of the Love-god are flow'rs,
"Yet by these he subdues the whole world to his pow'rs.

"Quit doubting, my mistress, hold fast by this token;
"The bow by Lord Rama will surely be broken."

The queen, at these words of her maid, ceased to doubt;
Her love was increased, faith put sorrow to rout.

With her eyes fixed on Rama, aware of the odds,
Sita anxiously offered her pray'rs to the gods;

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

Heart-eager, to win their support she essayed:
"O Siva, Bhawani, be kind; give your aid;

"May my faithful service this day be rewarded;
"Pray lighten the bow, thus let help be afforded.

"O giver of boons, Lord Ganesh, be thou gracious;
"My service to thee, may it be efficacious;

"Again and again I beseech thee to hear me,
"Pray lighten the bow; with this aid do thou cheer me."

DOHA 253

She watched Rama's form and, beseeching the gods,
All her courage and hope she assembled;
Her eyes filled with tears from her love; in the thrill
Of her longing her whole body trembled.

CHAUPAI 262

She thought of her father's dread vow with mind troubled,
And on Rama's grace contemplation re-doubled;

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"Alas! This my father's rash oath none can cross,
"Tho' 'twas made without thinking of gain or of loss.

"No counsel was given from fear by his minister,
"Such things 'mong wise men are evil and sinister.

"Thunderbolt-like is the bow, big and weighty;
"Tender that dark young form for task so mighty.

"Can flowers pierce diamonds? Not e'en in dreams.
"O God, give assurance, for hopeless it seems.

"This whole vast assembly is out of its mind;
"In you, Siva's bow, alone hope now I find;

"Cast your weight on the people, they'll bear it together;
"And looking on Rama, be light as a feather."

To Sita, so worried and pressed in her soul,
The seconds seemed ages, time seemed not to roll.

DOHA 254

She looked up at Rama, then down to the ground,
Her bright young eyes here and there flinging;
It seemed in the orb of her round moon-like face
Two young love-fish were playfully swinging.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

CHAUPAI 263

Her voice bee-like lay in her lotus-mouth bound,
Night-like modesty bade her to utter no sound;

The tears of her eyes in each corner were lying,
Like gold of a miser safe hidden from prying.

In her excitement she held back in diffidence,
Then taking courage thus rallied her confidence:

"If in my vows I am true and whole-hearted,
"And never my love from his feet has departed,

"Then God, he whom nothing from man's soul can sever,
"Will make me the handmaid of Rama forever.

"The thing to which all one's true love has been given
"Will surely become one's own, granted by Heaven."

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This faith she expressed as she gazed at her lord,
And he, the All-gracious One, knew ev'ry word;

He looked at her, then at the bow for her sake,
As a heron looks down on a small helpless snake.

DOHA 255

When Lakshman perceived that the gem of the fam'ly
Of Raghu on Siva's bow gazed,
He thrilled thro' and thro', stamped the earth with his foot,
And then this his great challenge he raised:

CHAUPAI 264

"Ye elephant guards! Ye—boar, serpent and tortoise,¶
"Hold fast that earth shake not! Be firm in your purpose!

"For Rama now breaks Siva's bow, so be ready!
"Give heed to my word now! Be ready! Be steady!"

As Rama looked down at the bow and drew near it,
The people implored the gods, pleading their merit.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

And then—All their errors and doubts and such things,
And all the proud folly of those stupid kings;

The weight of all dread Parsuram's pride and prejudice,
And of the saints' and gods' weakness and cowardice;

Sita's distresses: King Janak's repenting;
The anguish of all the queens, hot, unrelenting—

For all these great Siva's bow was the raft,
Together they all were there heaped on that craft;

The Lord's strength of arm was the sea to be crossed,
But no oarsman in view—so they all might be lost.

DOHA 256

As Rama looked over the people, they seemed
Like a picture all silent, unmoved;
And, turning to Sita, he saw that yet deeper
Distress gripped this fair one belov'd.

¶ Earth's supporters.

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CHAUPAI 265

He saw her with anguished anxiety wrung,
That to her each moment that passed seemed age-long.

What good to one already dead from his thirst
Is a nectar-lake, tho' at his side it out-burst?

Of what use is rain to crops withered and dead?
What use a changed mind when all chances have sped?

He looked at his dear one, her anxious love seeing,
While such thoughts and questions thrilled thro' his whole being.

He saluted his master as one he must please—
And then lifted the bow with the greatest of ease;

As he lifted it upward, like lightning it gleamed,
And when raised, like the great vault of heaven it seemed;

He strung it and bent it; 'twas done as they gazed,
But so quickly, none saw it; all stood there amazed;

And then, as he bent it, it broke in his hands
With a thunder-like crash that was heard thro' all lands!

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

CHHAND 24

The impact was hurled, Throughout every world;
Startled sun-steeds their pathway forsook;
Each elephant-warden, Groaned under his burden,
The earth and its bearers all shook.

Gods, demons and saints, Raised in terror their plaints,
"What has happened?" And all stopped their ears.
"Rama's broken the bow!" Tulsi answers, "And lo!
"Rama [illegible]! Victor hail!! Hear those cheers!"

SORATHA 26

Lord Rama's strong arm was the ocean,
On which like a boat lay the great bow of Siva;
Now all that, in foolish delusion,
On that boat relied have been drowned for their folly.

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CHAUPAI 266

The lord threw the bow on the ground in two parts;
At the sight of them rapturous joy filled all hearts.
A sea-bed was saint Visvamitra's kind face
Well filled with the water of true love and grace,
In which waves of ecstatic gladness upswelled,
As like the full moon Rama's form he beheld.
Joyous music was heard across heaven's broad plains;
The choirs were all dancing and singing sweet strains;
With Brahma, the gods, saints and sages, expressing
Their praises of Rama, poured on him their blessing;
Fair garlands of flowers rained down from above,
As the seraphs sang songs of devotion and love.
Cries of Victory! Hail! from all quarters were waking,
But could not be heard for the echoed bow-breaking.
Glad people were ev'rywhere raising their cry,
"Siva's bow has been broken by Rama! Jai! Jai!"

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

DOHA 257

The royal bards, minstrels and poets brought tributes
Of fine skilful art and of beauty;
The people brought elephants, horses, gold, gems
And clothes—tributes of love, not of duty.

CHAUPAI 267

Cymbals, conches and trumpets; pipes, drums, tambourines,
Were heard all around—noise by all noisy means;
And maidens and women in many a choir
Were singing their songs, ever gladder and higher.
The queen and her maids were as cheerful again
As a dry field of rice at the first fall of rain.
The king was now happy and free from all care,
Like a swimmer who feels land when tired to despair.

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The kings by the bow-breaking seemed dim and jaded,
Like lamps all whose brightness in daylight has faded,

And Sita—her heart's rapture who can describe?
The cuckoo who's blest autumn rain to imbibe.¶

While Lakshman had fastened his eyes on his brother,
Like pheasants that gaze at the moon and no other.

The counsellor Shatanand gave his permission,
Then Sita towards Rama went on her mission.

DOHA 258

She moved with ease, like a young swan in a lake,
Untold beauty and grace in each limb;
Her charming accomplished companions went with her,
All singing a rapturous hymn.

CHAUPAI 268

She seemed, as she stood there among her companions,
Like Beauty's Queen standing among Beauty-minions;

The victory-wreath in her lotus hands shone
Like the glory of him who all kingdoms has won;

Modest body held back, but mind eager and keen,
Her love deeply-hidden by none could be seen.

She drew near to Rama, his beauty she saw,
And stood like a picture an artist might draw.

A maid, as she stood there, abashment to check
Said quietly, "Come, put the wreath on his neck."

She raised up the wreath in her hands, and then stopped,
Overcome by emotion—it could not be dropped;

Her hands seemed two lilies on two slender stems
Giving shyly the moon a bright garland of gems;

At this beautiful sight her maids sang with new zest,
Her hands drooped and the garland fell on Rama's breast,

¶ A fabled cuckoo thirsty for late autumn rain, which is very rare.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

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SORATHA 27

When they saw Rama's face in the frame
Of the garland, the gods again rained down their flowers;
But all the kings shrank back in shame,
As lilies close up at the first rays of sunrise.

CHAUPAI 269

The city's bright music to heav'n was respondent;
The good were all glad, but the wicked despondent.

Gods, seraphs, saints, men and dumb creatures expressed
Their victorious joy as each other they blessed;

The nymphs and goddesses, with dancing and singing,
To earth frequent handfuls of flowers were flinging.

The priests in their places were reading the scriptures
And bards giving utt'rance to heroic raptures.

Thro' earth, hell and heaven this news was soon spread,
"Rama broke Siva's bow and now Sita will wed."

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

The citizens lighted and waved festive lights,
And gave gifts without thinking of means or of rights.

Sita-Rama were radi'nt, to each other plighted,
Like embodied Beauty and Passion united.

Her maids said to Sita, "Embrace Rama's feet;"
But from fear she held back, woman-wise and discreet.

DOHA 259

Recalling the fate of saint Gautama's wife,
She would not give her love such expression;
Lord Rama smiled inwardly, knowing her love
Was unequalled but linked with discretion.

CHAUPAI 270

As they looked upon Sita, inflamed with desire
The wild foolish kings all with rage were on fire;

They put on their armour, their weapons they seized,
And in mocking and boasting their feelings released;

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"Come, let us take Sita and carry her off;
"Let us bind up the princes right now," was their scoff.

"The bow broken? That's nothing! We've no misgiving;
"Can anyone marry the maid while we're living?

"If Janak should offer them any assistance,
"We'll fight him as well and break down all resistance."

The good rulers answered, on hearing these things,
"You have covered with shame this assembly of kings;

"Your strength, prowess, glory and pride are all scattered
"Forever, since now the great bow has been shattered;

"You boasted in vain; what new might have you found?
"Vaunting fools; God has brought all your pride to the ground.

DOHA 260

"Feast your eyes upon Rama; give up foolish envy
"And pride; let this lesson be learnt—
"The anger of Lakshman is like a fierce fire;
"Rouse him not, or like moths you'll be burnt.

SIVA'S BOW BROKEN AND SITA WON

CHAUPAI 271

"You're like crows that would rob the Bird-King, Great Garur;
"Or like hares that a tiger's own prey would secure;

"Like men vexed without cause, who yet want peace and health;
"Or like Lord Siva's foes, who yet want joy and wealth;

"Like men greedy and grasping, who want a good name;
"Or like lechers, who want to avoid guilt and shame;

"Like those souls God-forsaking, who want supreme bliss;
"Foolish kings, all your lust is as foolish as this."

Then Sita, distressed at a scene so unfitting,
In fear took her maids where her mother was sitting;

And Rama returned to his master in quiet,
Of Sita's love thinking and uplifted by it.

Sita sat near the queens, at heart this thought brewing,
"And now let us see what the Lord God is doing."

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While Lakshman, as those raving monarchs he heard,
Looked all ways, but for Rama's sake spoke no word.

DOHA 261

With red eyes, knitted brows, on the wild noisy kings
He cast one fiery, furious glance,
Like a young lion eager to spring on a band
Of wild elephants—waiting his chance.

CHAUPAI 272

The people, as this noisy tumult encroached
On their joy, with one mind the mad monarchs reproached.

Just then, by the breaking bow brought to the place,
Parsuram entered, sun of the great Lotus-race;

The kings, when they saw him, shrank back dumb and pale,
As, when the hawk swoops, shrinks the poor timid quail;

His body was fair and all covered with ashes;
Broad forehead adorned with the three Saivite splashes;

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

Long hair in a mass above face like the moon,
Which was red from his rage—not quenched easy or soon;

Brows drawn in a frown and eyes angrily flashing,
He glanced quickly round him, all high feelings quashing;

His arms big and strong; and across bull-like shoulders
Birth-thread, beads and deer-skin attracting beholders;

Scant cloth round his loins, and two full quivers hung;
In one hand bow and shaft; axe on one shoulder slung.

DOHA 262

In saintly attire, but with ways and appearance
And actions unspeakably savage;
The fierce martial spirit incarnated seemed
'Mong the monarchs, their kingdoms to ravage.

CHAUPAI 273

The kings all stood up overwhelmed and dismayed,
At so awesome a figure alarmed and afraid;

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Before Parsuram in deep reverence falling,
Each made himself known, on his forefathers calling.

He turned a kind natural glance upon some;
But even these felt that their last days had come.

Then Janak came forward and, reverence showing,
Called Sita, who also came up humbly bowing.

He gave her his blessing; her maidens delighted
Then led her to where their own comp'ny was seated.

Came saint Visvamitra also with the others,
And rev'rently brought to his feet the two brothers;

The two sons of Dasrath, without any scruple,
He bless'd as a noble and worthy young couple;

At Rama he gazed with look long and intense,
Whose beauty would shatter a Love-god's pretence.

DOHA 263

Then, turning to Janak, he said, "Tell me why
"All these people this place have invaded."
He knew very well, yet he asked as unknowing,
While anger his whole frame pervaded.

CHAUPAI 274

King Janak then told Parsuram the whole story,
And why all the kings had come there in their glory.

He listened and then turned his glance to one side,
And the broken bow there on the ground he espied;

Then, heated and angry, he said with a bellow,
"Who's broken the bow, Janak? Tell me, damn'd fellow;

"Tell quickly, you fool, or as I'm standing here,
"Your whole kingdom today I'll o'erthrow! Do you hear?"

The king could not answer, from fear well-nigh maddened;
The wild perverse monarchs were secretly gladdened;

The gods, saints, dumb creatures and citizens all
Were afraid in their hearts dread disaster must fall;

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Sita's mother deep down in her heart was lamenting,
"God's spoilt the whole thing when we thought Him consenting."

To Sita an instant seemed ten thousand years;
Word of Parsuram's temper revived all her fears.

DOHA 264

Thus seeing the people so fearful and troubled,
And Sita distressed and disturbed,
Lord Rama gave this quiet answer to dread
Parsuram, but himself unperturbed:

CHAUPAI 275

"The one who thus broke Siva's bow, my good lord,
"Must be one of your servants, I give you my word.

"Now, what are your wishes? None shall be denied
"If you tell me." The hermit in anger replied,

"A servant is one who in faith serves one's needs,
"But I answer by fighting an enemy's deeds;

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

"Hear you this, Rama, whoever broke Siva's bow,
"Like the thousand-armed hero,¶ is my deadly foe;

"Let him from the group be at once separated,
"Or else all these kings to destruction are fated."

Saint Parsuram's words having heard, Lakshman smiling
Gave answer in tones of contempt and reviling:

"I've broken, sir, many a bow as a child,
"But never before have I seen you so wild.

"Why have you for this one such proud passion claimed?"
Parsuram, at these foolish words, said—more inflamed:

DOHA 265

"Silence, child! Tho' a prince you are facing your death,
"If you don't hold your tongue and be quiet;
"This great bow of Siva is known to the world;
"Would you dare set your common bows by it?"

¶ Sahasrabahu, the thousand-armed.

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CHAUPAI 276

But Lakshman replied with a laugh, "Rev'rend sir,
"I have always thought all bows alike, I aver.

"When a worn-out bow breaks, what's the loss or the profit?
"At sight Rama thought it a new one; what of it?

"It's no fault of his, for it broke at his touch;
"Without cause, sir, you should not be angered so much."

With a glance at his axe, Parsuram, in a torrent,
Said, "Fool, you've not heard of my temper, I warrant.

"I'll not kill you now, for you're only a child;
"But you're wrong if you think me a saint soft and mild;

"Since a child a most fiery ascetic, as knows
"The whole world, and the Kshatriya race are my foes;

"By my arms, more than once, from their thrones I have hurled
"All the kings, and to Brahmans have given the world;

"Foolish prince, see this axe which all creatures alarms,
"And which lopped off Sahasrabahu's thousand arms.

DOHA 266

"So don't be a cause of distress to your mother
"And father, young prince, by your doom;
"The sound of my terrible axe has caused many
"Babes unborn to fall from the womb."

CHAUPAI 277

Lakshman smiled and replied in tones quiet but taunting,
"Fine hero you are, sir, your valour thus vaunting!

"You show me your axe as a weapon of death;
"But you can't blow up mountains with mere puffs of breath!

"I'm no cucumber flow'r that in calmness may linger,
"But wither and drop at the sight of a finger!

"When I saw you holding your axe, bow and shaft,
"I spoke proudly as fighters to those of their craft;

"But I see you're a Brahman by that sacred cord;
"Have your say! I'll endure without heat ev'ry word.

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"Upon gods, Brahman priests, cows and true devotees—
"'Tis a rule of our race not to wage war on these;

"To kill such brings us guilt; shame if us they defeat;
"You may strike me, sir, but I shall bow at your feet;

"In vain then this axe, bow and arrow you carry;
"Your word will like lightning a thousand foes harry.

DOHA 267

"I pray you forgive, rev'rend sir what I've uttered
"Unworthily, seeing your guise."
Parsuram at these words said in deep angry tones,
Visvamitra-ward turning his eyes:

CHAUPAI 278

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

"Listen here, son of Kusik,¶ this child is an ass;
"He will ruin his clan, his own doom bring to pass;

"On the bright Solar race he's a blot and a stain,
"Wholly ignorant, reckless, ungoverned and vain;

"He'll be dead in a trice should he not call a halt,
"And I loudly protest it will not be my fault;

"If you'd save him, then let him not go to such length;
"Of my great glory tell him, my fury and strength."

But Lakshman replied, "Sir, no need while you live
"Of another the tale of your greatness to give;

"You have often yourself told us with your own mouth
"Of your many great powers and doings, forsooth;

"But if you're not satisfied, tell us again;
"Don't be angry, nor suffer so much needless pain;

"You are brave, dauntless, patient by nature and usage,
"It does not become you to give such abusage.

DOHA 268

"Great heroes in battle do many great deeds,
"But themselves do not tell of their doing;
"'Tis cowards who, seeing their foes, begin loudly
"To brag, with the battle ensuing.

¶ Kausik, son of Kusik, another name of Visvamitra.

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CHAUPAI 279

"So you are now shouting to make me afraid,
"By frequently calling up Death to your aid."

At these harsh words of Lakshman, who would not relax,
Parsuram spoke and flourished his terrible axe:

"Let no one say now that the blame is on me,
"For this harsh-speaking youngster deserves death, I see;

"As I thought of his youth, more than once he was saved;
"But now truly he dies for the way he's behaved."

Visvamitra said, "Sir, your forgiveness he needs;
"Holy men give no thought to youth's good or ill deeds."

Said the other, "I'm angry by nature; I hold
"Here my axe, and the foe of my master¶ behold;

"So far, tho' he gave cheeky answers, I've spared
"Him from death, Visvamitra, since you I regard;

"If not, with my axe I'd have cut ere this thro' him,
"And paid to my master with ease the debt due him."

DOHA 269

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

Visvamitra said laughingly down in his heart,
"He thinks Vishnu a Kshatriya foe;
"Rama broke the bow like sugar-cane, but the truth
"Ignorant Parsuram does not know."

CHAUPAI 280

Then said Lakshman again, "To the world is well known
"Holy sir, the dread temper which here now you own;

"The debts owed your parents you've paid with great pains,†
"Now only the debt to your master remains;

"That debt now from me you are sternly demanding,
"The int'rest has grown, for it's long been outstanding;

¶ Siva, whose bow was broken.

† He had restored his mother to life and killed off Kshatriyas who killed his father.

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"So call up the creditor; when we have met
"I will open my purse and at once pay the debt."
Hearing these bitter words, Parsuram his axe grasped,
And the people in terror Alas! Alas! gasped.
Lakshman taunted, "Again your axe over me swings,
"But I spare you as Brahman, you foe of all kings;
"You've not happened to meet yet a soldier and rouse
"Him to fiht; holy Brahmans are big—in the house!"
Said the people, "He's wrong when he speaks in this way."
Rama signalled his brother his folly to stay.

DOHA 270

Lakshman's answer to Parsuram's wrath was like fuel,
The fierce flame was re-kindled by it;
So Rama, before it burst forth, said to quench it,
In tones that were courte'us and quiet.

CHAUPAI 281

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

"My lord, I beseech you to show him compassion;
"Don't pour on an infant your wrath in this fashion;
"If only he knew your true worth, would he ever
"So foolishly boast as your equal, sir? Never!
"When children are up to some mischief, their teachers
"And parents are pleased with the dear little creatures.
"Be kind to your servant, tho' patience he tries,
"As becomes one so resolute, saintly and wise."
Rama's quiet words cooled his rage down for a while,
But then Lakshman said something again, with a smile,
Which when Parsuram saw, again anger outburst;
He said, "Rama, your brother's a sinner accurst;
"At heart he is black, tho' in body he's fair;
"It is poison he drinks and not milk, I declare;
"He's by nature perverse; you he never will heed,
"And the rascal can't see that I'm deadly indeed."

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DOHA 271

Lakshman laughed and again said, "Saint, listen to me,
"For the root of all evil is wrath;
"People under its influence do sinful things
"And against the whole world set their path.

CHAUPAI 282

"I'm your follower, sir, I would like you to know;
"Give up anger and on me your favour bestow;

"Broken bows, sir, can never by rage be repaired;
"Just sit down, I beseech you, your feet must be tired!

"If you're fond of the bow, let the trouble be ended;
"Call some skilful workman and let it be mended."

At these words of Lakshman, said Janak afraid,
"Such discourtesy's wrong; at once let it be stayed."

The citizens too said in trembling and fear,
"The young prince has committed great wrong, it is clear."

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

Meanwhile Parsuram, hearing the lad's fearless tones,
Became helpless as anger burned thro' to his bones.

To Rama he said, "Now to you I am pleading;
"I've spared him as your brother, that one fact heeding;

"How can such foul mind with fair form be allied?
"Tho' the pot is of gold, there is poison inside."

DOHA 272

Again Lakshman smiled as he listened; but Rama
Forbade him to speak with a look;
So checking his hot-tempered words he returned,
And his place by his master he took.

CHAUPAI 283

Then Rama said gently, all passion with-holding
And simply, his hands in humility folding,

"Pray hear me, sir, you who by nature are noble,
"And do not pay heed to a mere childish foible;

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"A wasp and a child are alike in their spirit,
"A saintly man never to anger will stir it.
"In nothing has Lakshman, sir, done any harm;
"Only I am to blame and a cause for alarm;
"Be it kindness or wrath, death or bonds, let it fall
"Upon me as your servant—on me alone fall.
"King of saints, tell me quickly the way to assuage,
"Without waiting and wholly, your much-dreaded rage."

Said the saint, "Rama, how can my anger be cooled,
"When today I've by him been insulted and fooled?
"All this time I have kept back my axe from his neck;
"Say, what more could I do my hot anger to check?

DOHA 273

"When they heard of the terrible deeds of my axe,
"Queens were moved to give untimely birth.
"Here that axe I am holding and still I see living
"My princeling foe yet on this earth!

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

CHAUPAI 284

"My hand moves not, tho' in my breast anger burns;
"And my death-dealing axe swinging, unused returns;
"My whole nature is changed; Fate to me is perverse;
"I have never shown kindness in place of a curse;
"Fate today makes me suffer intol'rable pain."
Hearing this, Lakshman said, as he bowed low again,
"You're the image of kindness and grace, if you please,
"Utt'ring words that would strip all their flow'rs from the trees!
"If in kindness a saint's body burns like a crater,
"In anger 'tis saved only by the Creator."

Said Parsuram, "Janak, resisting my pity,
"This rash child is asking to go to Death's city!
"Remove him at once from my sight, the young devil,
"So small in appearance, yet so full of evil."

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But Lakshman, again laughing, said to the saint,
"Close your eyes; you'll see nothing and have no complaint."

DOHA 274

All his anger then Parsuram turned upon Rama,
And said in his furious fuming,
"You've broken Lord Siva's great bow and now further
"To teach even me you're presuming.

CHAUPAI 285

"Your brother has spoken this way by your teaching;
"There's naught but deceiving in all your beseeching;

"Come, fight me and give me my full satisfaction,
"Or be not called Rama if shirking such action!

"Quit lying! you're Siva's foes! Fight me, I say!
"Or both you and your brother right here I will slay."

Parsuram, as he said this, uplifted his axe;
Rama smiled, bowed his head, and unwilling to vex,

Said, "Lakshman's at fault, but on me falls your anger;
"It seems that uprightness may land one in danger.

"A crooked man other men fear and not follow;
"The bent crescent moon demon Rahu won't swallow.

"O saintly one, give up your wrath, I implore you;
"Your axe in your hand lies, my head is before you;

"So do what may please you, your anger to quench,
"And account me your servant, sir, humble and staunch.

DOHA 275

"Don't be angry; if master and servant should fight
"With each other, what sight could be sorrier?
"On seeing your garb Lakshman did you no wrong,
"But spoke out, thinking you a great warrior.

CHAUPAI 286

"Like a boy, seeing axe, bow and shaft in your hands,
"Of a hero he dared make heroic demands;

"Knowing not you, but only your name, he replied
"As seemed worthy your family spirit and pride;

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"If you'd come in the garb of a saint, as was meet,
"He'd have put on his head, sir, the dust of your feet.

"Forgive him this wrong that was done all-unknowing;
"A Brahman should always a kind heart be showing.

"No claim as your equal can we two advance;
"Can the feet with the head be placed, by any chance?

"Take our names, sir! I'm called Rama; just that alone;
"But by name of the Axe-bearing Rama you're known!

"My lord, I have only one cord to my bow,
"But your spirit the nine cords¶ of virtue can show!

"In ev'ry way to you we prove most inferior;
"Forgive our offence as a Brahman superior."

DOHA 276

Again and again Rama called him the saintly
And Brahman, to win back his favour;
But "You are perverse like your brother," said Parsuram
Angrily, at each endeavour.

PARSURAM AND THE TWO BROTHERS

CHAUPAI 287

"You think me a Brahman and give me that name;
"I'll show you the Brahmanhood I wish to claim!

"My bow is the ladle; my shaft the oblation;
"My anger the flame of a fierce conflagration;

"Great well-equipt armies the sacrifice fuel;
"The animals offered are kings slain in duel;

"Thus victims I've slain and cut up with my axe,
"And made numberless off'rings in warlike attacks;

"You know naught of my prowess and so you attempt
"To treat me, as a mild Brahman priest, with contempt;

"You have broken the bow, so you've grown most conceited;
"You, arrogant, think the whole world is defeated."

¶ A play on words, the same word used for bow-string and for virtues nine in number.

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Said Rama, "When speaking, sir, thought do not stifle;
"Your anger's too great, my offence was a trifle;
"The bow was so old; when I touched it, it broke!
"If one boasted at that, 'twould be simply a joke.

DOHA 277

"Truth to tell, Parsuram, if I dishonoured you
"As a Brahman, 'twere folly and error;
"But know this—there's not in the whole world a warrior
"To whom I would bow in sheer terror.

CHAUPAI 288

"Be it devil or god; be it monarch or soldier;
"My equal in strength, or one stronger and older;
"If me he should challenge to meet him in battle,
"I'll gladly—with King Death himself!—try my mettle.
"If one born a Kshatriya shrinks from the fight,
"He's a shame to his clan and a cowardly wight.
"I speak not in praise, but the truth in good faith;
"Men of Raghu's line fear not to fight even Death.
"But you Brahmans in lordship and strength have no peer;
"He who fears you has nothing else ever to fear."
At these gentle, profound words of Rama, the door
Of saint Parsuram's closed mind was opened once more;
"Rama, take this," he said; Vishnu's bow he out-held,
"And draw it; thus let my last doubt be dispelled."
Parsuram, as he gave it, was dazed with surprise;
For the bow strung itself—there, before his own eyes!

DOHA 278

As he realised now Rama's limitless pow'r,
His whole being was thrilled and inspired;
Humbly folding his hands, he gave voice to the love
With whose outburst his spirit was fired;

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CHAUPAI 289

"All hail to the sun of Raghu's lotus race!
"To the fire that burns devils, their sin and disgrace!

"All hail, friend of cows, gods and Brahmans devout,
"The destroyer of pride, error, anger and doubt!

"The ocean of tenderness, goodness, compassion,
"Excelling in all forms of speech and expression!

"The joy of his servants, himself wholly charming,
"With graces a myriad Love-gods disarming!

"One tongue of thy praises can ne'er tell the whole!
"Hail, thou swan in the lake of the Lord Siva's soul!

"You brothers are temples of mercy; forgive me
"The vile things I've said; 'twas unknowing, believe me."

Thus singing Lord Rama's loud praise, he withdrew
To the forest, his penance again to pursue.

While th' wicked kings, fearful now, bravado ended,
In separate silence their way homeward wended.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

DOHA 279

The gods upon Rama rained flowers and loudly
Their praises and plaudits they sounded;
The townsmen and women, as folly and fear
Were dispelled, shared in gladness unbounded.

CHAUPAI 290

Glad music was played by the people elated;
All possible places were well decorated;

Maids bright-eyed and beautiful gathered in throngs,
And in sweet bird-like voices sang exquisite songs.

The king of Videha now shared untold pleasure,
As one born in poverty finding great treasure.

To Sita, with fear gone, now all things seemed pleasant,
As full moon's uprising delights the young pheasant.

King Janak, with rev'rence the saint then addressing,
Said, "Rama has broken the bow by your blessing;

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"Helped by these two brothers, my plan has succeeded,
"So tell me, sir, what now is fitting and needed."

Said saint Visvamitra, "From you we have learned
"That the plan for the marriage upon the bow turned;

"The bow-breaking settled and sealed the affair;
"Of this all the people and gods are aware.

DOHA 280

"But, nevertheless, it is right you should follow
"What fam'ly traditions ordain;
"Consult then your elders, preceptors and priests
"And the scriptural rites ascertain.

CHAUPAI 291

"Send a herald to Avadh with urgent request
"That King Dasrath will visit you now as your guest."

"Very good, sir," was Janak's delighted response,
And he sent off a herald to Avadh at once.

He called of the townsmen the chief and select,
Who gathered and greeted their king with respect;

He asked that each street, bazaar, dwelling and temple
Be beautified with bright adornments and ample.

They went to their homes glad to share in such labours,
And called for the help of their servants and neighbours;

"Make all kinds of arches and pillars," they asked;
These helpers were happy thus happily tasked;

They called workmen well-skilled in mind, eye and hand,
To make all the beautiful canopies planned;

These started by lifting a heavenward call
And erecting gold plaintain stems graceful and tall;

DOHA 281

Upon these bright emerald foliage and fruit,
And flowers of rubies were set;
On seeing their wonder and charm, the Creator
Felt here his own match he had met.

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CHAUPAI 292

They made be-gemmed bamboos so life-like and green,
That no diff'rence between them and real ones was seen;

Climbing vines gold and life-like by gold tendrils clung,
And upon them bright life-like leaf clusters were strung;

They made of them wreaths with deft weaving and curls,
And set in them great strings of exquisite pearls;

They polished and cut, and in beautiful lotuses
Set rubies, diamonds, em'ralds and turquoises;

Then coloured insects and birds they set there
To sing, buzz and hover in currents of air;

They carved in the pillars the forms of gods standing,
As tho' to onlookers great gifts they were handing;

Upon the ground fantastic squares were designed
Of great elephant pearls, varied, clearly outlined.

DOHA 282

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

They cut many blue and green sapphires and of them
Made mango boughs fragrant and fine,
In which, hung by silken cords, emerald bunches
Of fruit and gold blossoms would shine.

CHAUPAI 293

Many festoons were woven, so charming and fair,
They seemed made by the Love-god all hearts to ensnare;

They made pillars and pinnacles, hung with all manners
Of beautiful curtains, skins, streamers and banners,

And jewelled lamps too; thus the charm of each dwelling
And street and pavilion was far beyond telling.

The canopy made for Vaidehi, the bride,
Not a poet could tell of it, howe'er he tried!

That for Rama, the groom, source of goodness and grace,
Would for splendour all splendours in all worlds displace.

The beauty that marked Janak's palace of state,
One could see in each homestead its fair duplicate.

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The city of Janak, seen thus in its wonder,
Excelled that of ev'ry realm both here and yonder;

The meanest of houses displayed there such riches
As even the heart of Lord Indra bewitches.

DOHA 283

The city in which lived the goddess of wealth
As Woman¶ (as told in our story),
Why, tongues divine even might long hesitate
And not try to relate all its glory.

CHAUPAI 294

To the birthplace of Rama the messengers came,
Glad to be in this city of beauty and fame;

At the door of the palace they sent in their word,
Dasrath had them brought to him as soon as he heard.

The king they saluted, the letter gave to him;
He rose to receive it as gladness thrilled thro' him;

He read it with eyes that for water seemed thirsting,
His body was trembling, his heart with joy bursting;

Of Rama and Lakshman thoughts rose in his mind
From the letter; no words for a while could he find;

Then he rallied and read out aloud the whole letter;
The council heard gladly the truth of the matter.

Now Bharat and Shatrughna came from their play
When they heard of the messengers come there that day;

They asked with respectful, affectionate ease,
"Father, whence came the letter? From whom? Tell us please;

DOHA 284

"Is it well with our two darling brothers? And where
"In what country just now are they staying?"
The king read the letter again, greatly pleased
At the love the two lads were displaying.

¶ Lakshmi as Sita.

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CHAUPAI 295

On hearing the news, the lads could not restrain
Their great joy, nor their love's strong upwelling contain.

The councillors gathered there greatly enjoyed
What they saw of young Bharat's love, pure, unalloyed.

The king at his side then the messengers seated,
And in gentle accents these questions repeated:

"Have you seen the two brothers yourselves? Then declare
"To us here all their doings and say how they fare."

They said, "The youths, dark and fair, bow and shaft bearing,
"With saint Visvamitra right well, sir, are faring."

"You know them," by love overcome Dasrath cried;
"Of the spirit pray tell us you've in them descried;

"From the day that they left with the saint, we have had
"Of their doings and welfare no word, good or bad.

"How came Janak to know them? What happened the while?"
To his love's eager words they replied with a smile:

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

DOHA 285

"There is no one your equal in fortune and blessing,
"O chief of all kings rightly crowned,
"Since your sons are that Rama and Lakshman, the glory
"Of all the world, truly renowned.

CHAUPAI 296

"There's no need of asking, sir, your sons to ken;
"They're the light of all worlds, they are lion-like men;

"When faced by their glory, their prowess, their boldness,
"The moon fades in darkness, the sun sinks in coldness.

"Why then should you ask, O king, how they were known?
"For a sight of the sun need a lamp's light be shown?

"Many heroes and monarchs were gathered in state
"To the place where fair Sita would choose her own mate;

"But Siva's great bow none among them could master,
"Each one tried his hardest but met with disaster;

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"As great ones their fame throughout all worlds has sounded,
"But Lord Siva's bow all their powers confounded;
"The demons and gods who Mount Meru have tossed,
"To their places returned, all their confidence lost;
"Great Ravan who lifted Mount Kailash when playing,
"Before all was beaten, this challenge essaying.

DOHA 286

"But listen, O monarch of monarchs; there Rama,
"Of Raghu's line royal the gem,
"The great bow broke in two, as an elephant might
"Without effort a frail lotus stem.

CHAUPAI 297

"At the sound Parsuram came there greatly enraged,
"And in hot looks and threat'nings his fury engaged;
"But he gave his own bow when he saw Rama's strength,
"And in meekness retired to the jungle at length.
"The equal of Rama in power victori'us
"Is Lakshman, the treas'ry of all that is glori'us;
"The monarchs all trembled at this royal scion,
"As elephants tremble before a young lion.
"My lord, when one sees your two sons, these young brothers,
"He'll nevermore fasten his gaze upon others."
The hearers were all greatly pleased at the fitness
Of this loving, forceful and outspoken witness;
Such joy to the king and his court this afforded,
That all said the heralds should be well rewarded;
The heralds from gifts turned away ear and sight,
And refused them; the givers approved this as right.¶

¶ A commentator puts this down to the fact that the bride's people should not take gifts from the groom's people.

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DOHA 287

The king went to visit Vashishth, his preceptor,
And gave him the letter to read;
He told the whole story, then sent for the heralds
And paid them all courteous heed.

CHAUPAI 298

The saint listened closely, then gladly he said,
"For the good man the whole world with goodness is spread.

"As all streams ev'rywhere to the ocean must flow,
"Even tho' love and longing it never can know;

"So must treasure and happiness come without call,
"And at once in the hands of the godly must fall.

"You have served saints and priests, cows and gods all your life,
"As Kausalya has also, your true faithful wife;

"Such doers of good deeds there never have been,
"Nor will be again, as yourself and your queen;

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

"No other king ever such fortune has won
"As you, having one such as Rama for son;

"Moreover, your four sons are all of them noted
"As valorous, godly, obedient, devoted;

"All things at all times your good fortune presage,
"So give orders at once for the wedding cortege."

DOHA 288

The king rose at once at his counsellor's words,
Made his bow and then quickly departed,
Assigned to the heralds their quarters and then
To his palace returned, gladsome-hearted.

CHAUPAI 299

He called all the queens and the ladies of court,
To them read Janak's letter and gave a report

Of the things that had happened and what was intended;
They all showed their joy when his story was ended.

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They all were uplifted with love in their wonder,
As peafowls on hearing the rain-cloud's loud thunder.

The counsellors' wives gladly called on God's blessing,
The queens all the while deep emotion expressing;

They took from each other the letter in turn,
And upon their breasts laid it to cool the heart's burn.

Many times the whole tale Dasrath had to repeat,
How by Rama and Lakshman the kings met defeat;

"Visvamitra's pow'r did it," he said as he went:
Then the radiant queens for their Brahman priests sent,

And gave them rich presents with hearts full and flowing;
The priests left them, on each their blessing bestowing.

SORATHA 28

The needy they called and each giver
Gave gifts in abundant variety to them;
The poor folks cried, "Long life for ever
"To conquering Emperor Dasrath's four sons,"

CHAUPAI 300

They left clad in bright new clothes, hearts with joy bounding,
The air all around with glad music resounding.

The news stirred the people to wild jubilations;
In every house could be heard gratulations;

Their dear Sita-Rama's betrothal with cheers
Was greeted that spread thro' the full fourteen spheres.¶

The news set the people to work with great pains
At adorning their houses, their streets and their lanes.

Altho', as their Lord Rama's home, Avadh city
Was always well kept, always pleasing and pretty,

Yet now to express all their fondest affection,
'Twas beautified newly in ev'ry direction;

¶ Seven above the earth and seven below.

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All thro' the bazaars, with the brightness of dawning,
Hung many a flag, festoon, streamer and awning;
Out came golden domes, arches, jewels in strings,
Heaps of sacred grass, spice, curds, rice, flow'rs and such things.

DOHA 289

Each one decorated his home and surroundings;
They soon beautified thus all places;
Then skilful men watered the streets, and designs
Set in courtyards and all open spaces.

CHAUPAI 301

Meanwhile bands of maidens the beauty were bright'ning
With all female ornaments, brilliant as lightning;
With sweet moon-like faces, the eyes of young deers,
Their beauty would bring the proud Love-god to tears;
They sang happy songs in such beautiful tones,
That the cuckoo's compared would seem nothing but groans.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

But who can describe the pavilion most lavish,
Set up in the palace the whole world to ravish?
All pleasing and bright things were used in its making;
Within on the ear happy music was breaking;
In one place the priests sacred scripture were chanting,
Elsewhere famous bards sang songs stirring and haunting;
While beautiful women their voices were blending
In songs about Rama and Sita unending;
The place seemed so small for such happy accord,
That it burst thro' the walls and on all sides was poured.

DOHA 290

Of King Dasrath's palace no poet can tell
All the glorious, wondrous magnificence;
The place where Lord Rama, the bright gem of heaven,
Was born in incarnate beneficence.

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CHAUPAI 302

The king then called Bharat and said, "These our needs—
"At once prepare elephants, chariots and steeds;
"And go Rama's marriage procession to bring."
The brothers were thrilled at these words of the king.
Bharat instantly sent for the captains and lords,
Who gladly and quickly gave heed to his words;
They set richest trappings upon the best horses,
Each with its own colours and marks of the forces;
Each horse was as quick in its steps and as fleet,
As a man who upon burning coals sets his feet;
Steeds of ev'ry fine breed, ev'ry strain, ev'ry kind,
But they all seemed to fly and could outrun the wind;
Each horse had as rider a gallant young blade,
Fit companion for Bharat and right royal aide;
Each was handsome, attired and adorned in good taste,
Bow and shaft in his hand, quiver full at his waist;

DOHA 291

They all were high-spirited, stalwart and supple;
All youthful, heroic and knightly;
Each one had two footmen, both expert in sword-play
And both runners swift, strong and sprightly.

CHAUPAI 303

Meanwhile warlike men from the forces of state
In their armour were waiting just outside the gate;
Their horses, all eager at hearing drum-calls,
Were impatiently pacing there under the walls.
The charioteers made their chariots resplendent
With many a much be-gemmed banner and pendant;
With sweet tinkling bells and with canopies fine,
They bid fair the bright Car of the Sun to outshine;

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Many horses were brought, ev'ry one with black ears,¶
And were yoked to their cars by the skilled charioteers;

Caparisoned gaily and so ornamented,
Their beauty might well drive a saint near demented;

On water they ran like dry land, and so swiftly
Their hoofs would not sink, being lifted so deftly.

The work of preparing the chariots completed,
The charioteers called on their lords to be seated.

DOHA 292

As these one by one took their places, the rest
Of the gath'ring procession was formed;
Some auspicious omen was seen by each one,
As his duties he quickly performed.

CHAUPAI 304

Fine *howdahs* were set on the elephants' backs,
The power to tell of their beauty one lacks;

The sound as they walked of their heavy-toned bells
Was like thunder of clouds that in monsoon-time swells.

There were other conveyances, all made to please;
Exquisite palanquins to give travellers ease;

In some many Brahman priests sat in such glory,
They seemed hymns embodied from scripture and story;

In others were minstrels and bards, men of song,
Each set where his rank and his duty belong.

There were all kinds of camels and asses and bullocks;
So laden with goods that they seemed little hillocks;

And thousands of porters who bore on their shoulders
Such masses of stuff as would stagger beholders;

Retainers and servants were there in great bands,
With all that they needed to meet all demands.

¶ Thought an auspicious thing.

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DOHA 293

With no sense of fear, but with fulness of joy
And with body and mind animated,
"We'll see our dear Rama and Lakshman," they said,
Every heart this hope anticipated.

CHAUPAI 305

The creaking of chariot wheels, neighing of horses,
And bell tones would reach to the stars in their courses;

The loud strains of music all thunders would drown,
None could hear voices near him, nor even his own.

The crowd was so dense gathered round the king's door,
That the stones became dust, there was pavement no more.

Upon the verandahs, in hand festal dishes,
The court ladies watched, as they talked of their wishes

And merrily sang all their bright wedding lays,
With a joy none could tell to the end of his days.

Sumant then gave orders two cars to prepare,
With horses whose swiftness the sun's steeds would dare;

Two large gorge'us chariots were brought to the king;
Even Sarda their praise could not fittingly sing;

For King Dasrath's councillors one was intended;
The other yet more unbelievably splendid;

DOHA 294

In this one he first of all seated Vashishth,
His preceptor, with proud, happy grace;
Then calling on Siva, Parvati, Ganesh,
And his elders, he too took his place.

CHAUPAI 306

The king and Vashishth mutu'l grandeur increased,
As tho' Indra were seated beside the gods' priest.

All the fam'ly and scriptural rites having done,
The king saw that the journey might now be begun.

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At his master's word, Rama enshrined in his heart,
With a blast of his conch he gave orders to start.

The gods too rejoiced o'er this wedding array,
And rained down their blossoms to bless the glad day.

The horses and elephants lifted loud cries;
The music of wedding bands rose to the skies;

Male and female, on earth and in heaven, all sang
To the tones of sweet pipes, till the wide welkin rang;

Loud cymbals and bells clashed, the men at arms danced
As in fight; joyful servants waved flags as they pranced;

Merry buffoons and jesters loud laughter provoked,
As they sang funny songs, cut their capers and joked;

DOHA 295

Gallant youths, to the beating of drums, made their horses
To curvet and dance to the measure;
While well-practised dancers, at seeing them lose
Not a beat, showed their wonder and pleasure.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

CHAUPAI 307

None could tell all the splendour, however he tried;
Happy omens were noticed on every side;

On the left hand a blue jay was picking up food,
As tho' he were saying, "All's working for good;"

In a beautiful field a black crow on the right
And a mongoose were seen, a most fortunate sight;

Fragrant breezes were blowing, refreshing and mild;
Bearing water there came a fair woman and child;

Again and again a young fox showed himself,
And a cow just ahead was seen suckling her calf;

Then again on the right came a herd of fine deer,
Like a gath'ring of all that could offer good cheer;

The sounds of good fortune on all hands were heard;
On the left in a tree sat a singing black-bird;

Came a man bearing curds and fish, promise of feasts;
With their books in their hands went by two learned priests.

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DOHA 296

The omens of good seemed to gather at once,
On this venture their promise outpouring,
All happiness, blessing, fulfilment of wishes,
Success and true riches assuring.

CHAUPAI 308

The king whose dear son was the good divine Spirit—
'Twas nat'ral that he all such good should inherit.

With Rama as groom and with Sita as bride,
Godly fathers like Dasrath and Janak beside,

As they heard of this union, the omens with dances
Said, "Now God fulfils all our promise and chances."

In this way the wedding procession set out,
With animals' cries, drums and many shout.

At word of their coming, King Janak gave orders
To bridge all the rivers within the State's borders;

Some fine resting-places were built on the road,
Where all heavenly comforts for guests were bestowed;

There were clothes, there were beds, there were all tasty dishes,
For ev'ryone's need, meeting ev'ryone's wishes;

At every stage such new comforts they'd find,
That they all lost their thoughts of the homes left behind.

DOHA 297

At last, when the people of Janak could tell
The procession was near, by drums beating;
With elephants, chariots, horses and footmen
They went out to give their guests greeting.

CHAUPAI 309

They took golden pitchers and salvers and trays,
And plates for fine eatables all tastes to please,

Full of food with most ravishing flavour and smell,
Of all kinds—of them all there is no room to tell.

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King Janak sent presents of all kinds of fruit,
And of fine costly things ev'ry purpose to suit;

There were ornaments, jewels, fine garments and horses,
Fine elephants, birds, deer and cars for all courses;

Rich perfumes and spices, delectable things
As were worthy to honour great guests of great kings;

Light eatables too, such as parched rice and curds;
All was borne by strong porters—'tis all beyond words.

When the welcoming folk saw the wedding procession,
Of bodies and minds radiant joy took possession;

The guests too, on seeing the welcome thus given,
Were glad and raised music till heaven was riven.

DOHA 298

With joy the two parties, thus coming together,
Reins loosed and united their ranks,
As tho' two great oceans in gladness were merging,
O'erflowing their limits and banks.

CHAUPAI 310

The goddesses rained flowers down with sweet singing;
The gods beat their drums till heav'n's portals were ringing.

The gifts to the feet of King Dasrath were brought,
And his favour in accepting all was besought;

With love and with gladness did Dasrath receive them,
And then for the poor and the needy he gave them.

With praises and honours and humble requests,
The welcomers led to the guest-house their guests;

On the road many rich cloths as carpets were spread;
On these, going forward, King Dasrath must tread;

To each guest was given a beautiful suite,
With all that for need and for comfort was meet.

When Sita got word that the guests had arrived,
To show her own greatness this means she contrived,

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She called on the spirits of ev'ry good quality,
Bidding them see to the king's hospitality.

DOHA 299

The spirits obeyed, to the guest-chamber went,
And at once found there ample employment;
They took with them every heavenly luxury,
Comfort and happy enjoyment.

CHAUPAI 311

From the pleasure he found in his room, each guest felt
He had come to the place where the heav'nly ones dwelt;

They said, for the real reason none of them knew,
"It was Janak who did it; 'tis what he would do."

Knowing well Sita's power, his mind dwelling on it,
Lord Rama rejoiced, for he knew who had done it.

When the two brothers heard that their father had come,
They were well-nigh o'erwhelmed with their joy, well-nigh dumb;

Tho' wanting to see him at once, they restrained
Their desire, and from telling their teacher refrained;

This modesty saint Visvamitra could read,
Which gave to him great satisfaction indeed;

He pressed the two lads in his joy to his heart,
And thrilled as the tears in his eyes 'gan to start;

Together they hastened to King Dasrath's quarters,
Like thirsty men eagerly seeking cool waters.

DOHA 300

When King Dasrath saw that his sons and the saint
Their own way to his chamber had found,
He rose and went to them with gladness as tho'
In a sea of bliss finding firm ground.

CHAUPAI 312

He bowed to the saint with mind loving and lowly;
Placed dust on his head from feet sacred and holy.

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The saint blessed the king, gave a loving embrace,
And asked how he fared since he last saw his face.

As the king saw the two brothers next to him bowing,
His heart with new rapture was filled to o'erflowing;

In a loving embrace separation's dread pain
Was dispelled, as tho' life to a corpse came again.

To Vashishth the two brothers then bowed in their turn;
He embraced them; love's fire yet more warmly did burn;

They next made their bows to the priests of the party,
And from them received blessings welcome and hearty;

Shatrughna and Bharat to Rama, big brother,
Gave greeting; he embraced first one, then the other;

To see Lakshman also they both were delighted,
And thus the four brothers once more were united.

DOHA 301

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

For citizen, mendicant, minister, friend,
For caste brother, kinsman and servant,
The courteous, kindly Lord Rama for all
Had a greeting befitting and fervent.

CHAUPAI 313

Again seeing Rama, fresh love took possession
Of all who had come in the wedding procession;

As Dasrath's four sons in their glory they studied,
It seemed the four chief things in life were embodied;

The townsmen and women found limitless joys,
In watching the king with his four handsome boys;

Sweet blossoms rained down from celestial throngs;
Nymphs danced as drums beat and the minstrels sang songs.

Shatanand, with the priests and officials of state,
Minstrels, players and bards who had gone to the gate,

To meet with their guests and with honour receive them,
Now courte'usly asked for permission to leave them.

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The joy was increased thro' the city then spreading—
The guests came before the day fixed for the wedding;
The people shared joys that to heaven belong,
And prayed that the Lord days and nights would prolong.

DOHA 302

The townsmen and women all said as they met
And discussed the fine things they expected:
"In Rama and Sita is glory fulfilled,
"And good deeds in the kings are perfected;

CHAUPAI 314

"To Janak and Dasrath their virtues are giving,
"In Sita and Rama, their fruit fair and living;
"None others have Siva so faithfully served;
"None others such fruit have obtained or deserved;
"Such persons were never before seen on earth,
"None are now to be found, none will e'er come to birth.
"Born and living as Janakpur's people, we've reaped
"All the wondrous good fortune upon us now heaped;
"No folks in this world have so fortunate been,
"As we who both Sita and Rama have seen;
"Yet more—Rama's wedding we'll see as our right,
"And shall gladden our eyes with so pleasing a sight."
The girls to each other, tones eager and sweet,
Whispered, "Bright-eyes! This wedding will be a great treat;
"Good luck will oft give us this happy surprise,
"These two brothers will oft come as guests of our eyes;

DOHA 303

"King Janak, compelled by his love, will call Sita
"To come here again and again;
"To bring her and take her back home, who will come
"But these handsome and ravishing twain?

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CHAUPAI 315

"For visits and meetings there'll often be cause;
"Who would not come gladly to see such 'in-laws'?
"We'll often see Rama and Lakshman that way;
"Town and people will often be festive and gay."
Said one maid, "Like Rama and Lakshman, my dear,
"Two more lads have come with the king, and are here;
"In ev'ry way charming, one dark and one fair,
"Say all who have seen also this princely pair."
"I saw them today," said another, "and thought
"The Creator such youths with his own hand has wrought;
"Young Bharat is so much like Rama, his brother,
"Seen suddenly one can't be told from the other;
"Shatrughna and Lakshman are also as one,
"Wholly charming, none like to them under the sun;
"The lips cannot tell all the thoughts of the mind,
"In the whole universe none like them could one find."

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

CHHAND 25

Tulsi says, None could find, Any likeness or kind,
To compare with them, howe'er discerning;
They are peerless in truth, In their glorious youth,
Strength and courtesy, goodness and learning.
The women all spread, Out their garments and said,
As to Brahma they made their petition,
"May the four brothers tarry, Till here they all marry;
"To sing then will be our glad mission."

SORATHA 29

Eyes streaming and bodies a-quiver,
The women said time and again to each other,
"Lord Siva, the generous giver,
"Will do it; the kings are so boundless in merit."

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CHAUPAI 316

In this way the women expressed their desire,
Their hearts with their rapture and love all afire.

The kings who had come for the bride-winning test,
Having seen the young brothers were happy and blest;

They praised Rama's spotless bright glory and fame,
And, delighted, returned to the homes whence they came.

Some days in this manner were happily spent,
With the townsfolk and guests all as one and content.

At length came the auspicious day, with good reason
For joy, in the pleasantly cool month and season.

The day Brahma fixed had the zodiac sign,
Day of moon, star conjunction and all else in line.

Thro' Narad the saintly he sent them due word
Of the day, in which Janak's own wise men concurred.

The people all said, when they heard of this thing,
"Just like gods are these great learned men of the king."

DOHA 304

At sunset, the cows' homing time, when the hour
Is most pleasing, air cool and delicious,
The Brahmans all came to the king and they told him,
"This hour is the time most auspicious."

CHAUPAI 317

The king then gave word to the family priest,
"There is no need for further delay, not the least."

So Shatanand called the officials of state,
Who brought things prepared, signs of happiest fate.

Loud music from drums and from trumpets was played;
All around happy symbols and signs were displayed;

Fair maidens sang songs, adding much to the pleasures;
While priests chanted scripture in low devout measures.

Thus all kinds of gladness and honour displaying,
They came where the whole wedding-party was staying;

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The comp'ny of Indra seemed meagre compared
With the group that the Kosala king had prepared.

"The time has arrived, kindly come," was their word,
And at once happy music and drum beats were heard.

Consulting his priest, fam'ly rites were performed;
By his preceptor led, the king's party was formed.

DOHA 305

On seeing the glory and power of Dasrath,
Lord Brahma and other great gods
Sang thousand-tongued praises, "Our glory," they said,
"Is as naught set against such great odds."

CHAUPAI 318

The deities, glad at this happy occasion,
Beat drums and rained flowers, nor needed persuasion;

While Siva and other gods gathered their troops,
And mounting their chariots, set out in groups.

Bodies thrilling with love, all around gladness shedding,
They set out to witness the Lord Rama's wedding;

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

Then seeing the city of Janak on earth,
They felt their own realms were of far lesser worth;

As on all the marvellous structures they gazed,
And their wondrous adorning, they all were amazed;

The citizens, women and men, were all beautiful,
Virtuous, courteous, charming and dutiful;

Gods and goddesses beside them seemed jaded,
As stars that in light of the full moon have faded;

The Lord Brahma chiefly this sight did astound,
As among them his handiwork nowhere was found.

DOHA 306

But Siva admonished them, "Do not give way
"To surprise at this fair panorama;
"Be patient and ponder this happy occasion,
"The wedding of Sita and Rama;

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CHAUPAI 319

"Whose names uttered once have such force in the world,
"That all ill from existence forever is hurled;

"Thro' whom the chief blessings of life are attained,
"Sita-Rama are they," the Lord Siva explained.

With such counsel he opened his heart to the full,
And then Siva went on again riding his bull.

Then as they saw Dasrath set out with his train,
All the gods were enraptured and thrilled once again;

The great host of Brahmans and saints seemed indeed
As tho' gods were incarnate to serve ev'ry need;

And with them the four handsome princes did seem
The embodiment here of heav'n's blessings supreme;

In colour two dark sapphire blue and two golden;
The gods when they saw them in love's chains were holden;

The vision of Rama so quickened their powers,
They praised Dasrath greatly and rained joyous flowers.

DOHA 307

As Siva and Uma, with undisguised rapture,
Intently on Rama's form gazed,
They too felt the fresh thrill of love with a glowing
Of body, eyes filling and dazed.

CHAUPAI 320

His dark body glowed like the peacock's bright neck;
His rich coloured clothes abashed lightning would check;

The bright wedding jewels his body adorning
All shone with the radiant lustre of morning;

His face like the clear autumn moon at the full;
Eyes to shame the young lotus that floats on the pool;

Such beauty—not earth, only heav'n could reveal it;
The mind could not tell, tho' it deeply could feel it.

His brothers were with him astride their fine horses,
Restraining their high-mettled steeds in their courses;

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There rode also many a princely attendant,
While bards sang the line in which each was descendant.

The steed Rama rode, paced like lightning's swift flash,
The great king of all birds in his flight would abash;

Its beauty—How tell it? It seemed in its course
That the Love-god was there in the guise of a horse.

CHHAND 26

To all it appeared, That the Love-god endeared
To Lord Rama was there in his splendour;
His vigour and youth, Frame and beauty in truth
The whole world slave to longing might render;

The saddle too shone, Rama sitting thereon,
With fine rubies and pearls thickly set;
Be-gemmed bridle and band, It seemed surely must land
Even gods and saints in envy's net.

DOHA 308

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

The horse was so heedful of Lord Rama's mind,
And magnificent too in its prancing,
It seemed at the touch of a lightning-shot, star-
Studded cloud a fine peacock was dancing.

CHAUPAI 321

Not Sharda divine-tongued could frame a fit ode
To describe well the steed upon which Rama rode.

The beauty of Rama held Siva entranced,
Thro' his full fifteen eyes then his love was enhanced.

Vishnu too, seeing Rama with love's eager eyes,
Was caught up with his Lakshmi in gladdened surprise.

Happy Brahma watched Rama, love's happy provision,
Regretting he had but eight eyes for the vision.

Then Kartik, the chief of the gods' fighting host,
Over Brahma exulted—twelve eyes he could boast.

And, looking on Rama, great Indra, once curst,
By saint Gautam, was raised to the height of the first;

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The gods all said, "Nothing can equal his blessing,
"A thousand eyes for this glad vision possessing."

This vision of Rama delighted all heaven;
Like joy to the courts of the two kings was given.

CHHAND 27

Each company royal, all loving and loyal,
With music and drum-beats rejoices;
The gods too rain showers, Of blessings and flowers,
In Rama's praise lifting their voices.

The procession was heard; In the palace the word.
Of its coming with music thus spreading,
The queen gave command, To her fair women band
To prepare for the rites of the wedding.

DOHA 309

The women got ready the torches and platters
To use in the rite of lustration;
Then eagerly went with their slow graceful gait,
To be ready for this celebration.

CHAUPAI 322

With eyes like young fawns and with sweet moon-like faces,
Their charm would rob Rati of pride in her graces;

In robes of all colours, all costly and gay,
Gems too in each spot where they gems might display;

Ev'ry limb with rich grandeur and ornament shone,
And they sang sweetest songs in their sweet bird-like tone;

Bells tinkled on each pretty arm, foot and waist;
Like young elephants moved they with well-restrained haste;

From all kinds of instruments music was sounding;
On earth and in heaven was gladness abounding.

The wisest of goddesses such as Indrani,
And Sharda and Lakshmi and also Bhawani,

Disguised as four beautiful women appeared
And with those of the palace the happiness shared;

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They sang with the rest, thus their own gladness voicing;
None knew them, for all were o'ercome with rejoicing.

CHHAND 28

Say, who could know whom? As to welcome the groom,
They went out overwhelmed and ecstatic,
Heaven's flowers and songs, Heaven's drumbeats and gongs,
Made the welcome and joy more emphatic.

When they saw in due course, The young bridegroom, the source
Of their joy, hearts were full to o'erflowing;
Lotus eyes were all filled, Tender bodies all thrilled,
With a joy well beyond earth's bestowing.

DOHA 310

The joy that there came to the mother of Sita,
On seeing young Rama so handsome,
The tongues most divine could not tell in a hundred
Long ages, nor for a king's ransom.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

CHAUPAI 323

Restraining their tears in this happy event,
The queen and her maids for this ritual went;

They carried out ev'rything, nothing disdained,
That scripture and family custom ordained.

With singing the five kinds of music did sound,
And all kinds of carpets were spread on the ground.

With due rites of cleansing and off'rings inducted,
The groom to the great wedding-hall was conducted;

King Dasrath and his retinue took their places,
With glory that made other kings hide their faces;

The gods ev'ry moment let bright flowers fall,
While the priests read the pray'rs asking peace upon all.

Above and below glad commotion was rising;
That none could hear naught else was no-way surprising.

Lord Rama then entered, by all seen and known;
As oblations were made, he was led to his throne.

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CHHAND 29

On his throne he was seated, Rites lustral repeated,
All glad at the vision thus proffered;
As women sang songs, All the onlooking throngs
Jewels, raiment and gems gladly offered.

Lord Brahma in guise, Of a priest, had his eyes
On these doings, the other gods too;
Life seemed well worth living, This spectacle giving—
The crown of the line of Raghu.

DOHA 311

To singers and dancers, torch-makers and barbers
The gifts were all there distributed;
They all bowed their heads to the blessing of Rama,
With joy that could not be computed.

CHAUPAI 324

King Janak and Dasrath with mutual affection,
Observed ev'ry sacred and worldly direction;
To picture these kings in their glory united,
The poets have tried—it cannot be indited;
When many have tried, but have failed and despaired,
Only with themselves can the two kings be compared.
There seeing these fathers in such happy union,
The gods sang the praise of such wondrous communion:
"Since Brahma created the wide world," they said,
"Many times we have heard and have seen couples wed;
"But we never have seen, tho' we often have watched,
"Two fathers and fam'lies so happily matched."
On hearing these words, heav'nly, truthful and seemly,
The love of all hearers possessed them supremely.
With libations, Janak—a carpet unfolding,
Led Dasrath within to his place, all beholding.

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CHHAND 30

Great wonder and awe, Struck the saints when they saw,
The pavilion majestic and beautiful;
To the place for him planned, Janak with his own hand,
Led each guest, himself courtly and dutiful;

Vashishth as divine, And the god of his line,
Did he welcome, his blessing receiving;
The love he displayed, And the rev'rence he paid
Visvamitra is past all conceiving.

DOHA 312

Then saint Vamadev and the others well-learned,
He welcomed with pleasure unfeigned,
And led them to seats worthy of the divine,
And from each one his blessing obtained.

CHAUPAI 325

To Dasrath of Kosala too all the time
He paid as to deity honours sublime;

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

Hands folded he praised him, for blessing importunate,
Calling himself among men the most fortunate.

Gladly he paid to each guest honours highest,
As tho' in relation each one was the nighest;

In place that was worthy thus each one was seated;
One tongue cannot tell the joy, tho' oft repeated.

The king received thus the whole party with honour,
By meek gestures, words and gifts—himself the donor.

Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, the great Lord of Day,
The eight wardens of earth, drawn by Rama's array,

Disguised as great Brahmans were present the while,
And watched all that happened with calm, quiet smile;

Them too Janak welcomed, in no way surprised,
Gave them seats like the rest—they were not recognised.

CHHAND 31

Who could tell who was who, And discern between two,
When themselves all the guests had forgotten,

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And seeing the course, Of their joy and its source,
Both groups bathed in the bliss they had gotten?

As the gods he discerned, In his heart Rama turned,
Rev'rence paid them and gave worthy place;
They also discerning, His mind, showed their yearning
And gladsomeness in each glad face.

DOHA 313

The eyes of all present on Rama's face gazed,
Like the partridge intent on the moon;
They rev'rently drank in their fill with a joy
That to all was a heavenly boon.

CHAUPAI 326

Vashishth then gave word that the moment was fitting;
With def'rence came Shatanand where he was sitting;

"Go quickly," said Vashishth, "and bring in the maiden."
The priest joyous went with such joyous task laden;

He went to the queen and her maids in their hall;
Who at once showed their pleasure on hearing his call.

The priestly and elderly ladies then bringing,
The family rites they performed with sweet singing.

The goddesses too in disguise were all there,
In the first dawn of womanhood, charming and fair;

The ladies all welcomed them, tho' in this guise,
Dear indeed, not a one could their guests recognise;

The queen paid them constantly reverent heed,
As tho' they were goddesses, divine indeed.

Fair Sita as bride there they dressed and prepared,
Then forth to the waiting pavilion they fared.

CHHAND 32

Attendants obedient, Led then the radiant
Bride to the place of the marriage,
All bright as the morning, With richest adorning
And elephant-like graceful carriage;

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The saint and the sage, In thought could not engage
For the sweet bird-like tones of their singing;
Their ornaments mingling, With musical jingling,
Kept time with their slow rhythmic swinging.

DOHA 314

The beauty of Sita shone out with such radiance,
Among all those fair forms and faces;
'Twas like divine glory and bliss set among
Perfect embodied feminine graces.

CHAUPAI 327

The beauty of Sita is far beyond telling,
So feeble my mind is for charms all excelling.

The wedding guests watched her there, gracefully, slowly
Advancing in beauty unrivalled and holy;

They all paid their heart's homage as she passed by,
And seeing her come Rama knew bliss was nigh.

King Dasrath and all the young princes rejoiced,
With a rapture within them that could not be voiced.

The gods, raining flowers down, gave rev'rent greeting,
The saints with glad voices their blessing repeating.

The townsmen and women excitedly drowned
With their singing and drum-beating all other sound.

Thus Sita arrived there; as on her they gazed,
For all blessings of peace the glad saints their pray'rs raised.

The two fam'ly priests then, as scripture indites,
Carried thro' all the usual customs and rites.

CHHAND 33

The priests carried thro', All the rites that were due
To Parvati, Ganesh and the sages;
The gods then appeared, Were devoutly revered,
Blessing gave, sharing joy of the ages.

On telling their wishes, Delectable dishes
To each saintly person were handed,

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By a waiting attendant, In vessels resplendent
Of gold, on the instant demanded.

As the Lord would direct, With their love and respect,
All the family rites were conducted;
To each pow'r of heav'n, Due worship thus giv'n,
To her throne the fair bride was inducted.

None present discerned, All the true love that burned,
For each other in those two young hearts;
'Tis beyond tongue and mind; Any poet will find
'Tis beyond him, despite all his arts.

DOHA 315

The Fire-god appeared in his bodily form,
When the burnt-off'ring rite was enacted;
The scriptures came also as Brahmans, and there
In this guise all the rites they directed.

CHAUPAI 328

King Janak's queen-consort—the world knows her well;
Fair Sita's fair mother—her worth none can tell;

In her, as created by God, one would find
Finest glory, good deeds, bliss and beauty combined.

The priests, when the moment came, sent her a call;
With honour her maids brought her into the hall;

In state on the king's left hand sat Queen Sunaina,
As by King Himalaya sits queenly Maina.

Gold vessels and platters all costly and rare,
With pure water and perfume well filled, were set there;

The king and his wife took these in their own hands,
And before the groom placed them as custom demands.

The priests in glad voices read verses from scripture,
While gods rained down flowers and shared the day's rapture.

At sight of the groom all their hopes were complete;
The glad king and queen washed the Lord's sacred feet,

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CHHAND 34

Thus wholly enraptured, Their hearts by love captured,
They wash the fair lotus-like feet;
As victorious cries, And loud singing arise,
Heav'n and earth with the sound are replete;

Those feet which we find, Are forever enshrined
In the lake of the Lord Siva's soul;
By which, when recalled, All the sin that appalled
Is dispelled, the heart cleansed and made whole;

The feet by whose touch, For their power is such,
The great saint's sinful wife found deliv'rance;
Whose fragrance most rare, Permeates Siva's hair,
Say the gods—pure and worthy of rev'rence;

To which swarm as bees, In the hope of release,
Saintly hearts who to serve them are willing;
To wash those feet holy, King Janak bends lowly,
While glad cries from all lips are swelling.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

The groom and the bride, Join their hands; at their side
Stand the fam'ly priests scripture repeating;
Then gods, saints and men, Raise their Huzzahs! again,
At the sight of this happy uniting.

As they gazed on the youth, Source of all joy in truth,
King and queen both rejoiced beyond measure;
As ordains sacred text, Custom too, the king next;
Gave his daughter away, with great treasure;

As to Vishnu the Sea, Gladly gave up Lakshmi,
As the Snow-king gave Girija to Shiv,¶
So to Rama who sought her, Gave Janak his daughter;
His fame thus forever shall live.

The king as he studied, In Rama embodied
All beauty and grace, naught else needed.
Due offerings made, And the wedding knot tied,
Then the rite of encircling proceeded.

¶ One form in English of Siva; Tulsi too varies his forms to achieve rhyme.

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DOHA 316

At the loud cries of Victory! reading of scripture,
Loud singing and instruments playing,
The gods from the Heavenly Tree sprinkled down blossoms,
Their own sincere joy thus displaying.

CHAUPAI 329

The bridegroom and bride carried thro' their slow wheeling;
The eyes of all watching expressed their glad feeling;

Attempts to describe them were fruitless and void,
No matter what pictures and terms one employed;

The handsome young couple's delightful reflection
Shone forth from bright pillars in ev'ry direction;

It seemed the Love-god and his wife had attended
The rites just to look on a wedding so splendid,

And wished to see all, but from shyness and fear
Would show themselves sometimes and then disappear.

Those watching in gladness were wholly immersed,
Like Janak themselves they forgot from the first.

The circling, till stopped by the priests, was repeated;
With gifts then the rest of the rites were completed.

On Sita's brow Rama applied the vermilion;
Its charm beyond telling shone thro' the pavilion;

His arm seemed a serpent all thirsty for nectar
From lotus-like moon face, as thus he bedecked her.

By Vashishth directed, they both then sat down
Together, the bridegroom and bride on one throne.

CHHAND 35

When Rama was sitting, With Sita as fitting,
On them Dasrath, thrilled thro' and thro',
Looked with ecstatic gaze; It now seemed his good ways,
Like the Tree of Life, fruited anew.

As the message was carried, "Lord Rama is married,"
The world throbbed with joyous devotion;

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I could ne'er sing the song, Having only one tongue,
And too cold that for such high emotion.

Janak then by command, Of Vashishth took in hand
Further weddings, with keen love and hearty;
Three maids by his call, Were thus brought to the hall—
Mandavi, Urmila, Srutikirti.

The first of the three, Virtuous Mandavi,
Kushaketu's young daughter bewitching,
To Bharat he brought, Ritual blessing besought,
Faith and true love their union enriching.

Once again, with eclat, Charming dark Urmila,
Younger sister of Sita, most winsome,
With due rites and honour, Conferred there upon her,
To Lakshman was wed, fair and handsome.

The third lovely bride, Srutikirti bright-eyed,
Who for virtues and graces was noted,
King Janak then led, To Shatrughna; they wed
And to each other proved most devoted.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

As each modest young pair, Bride and groom, dark and fair,
Gazed on each other, fitly contrasted,
They rejoiced on their part; All who saw, from the heart,
Rejoiced too—long that joy of theirs lasted.

There each lovely bride, And the youth at her side,
'Neath one roof were as King and Queen seated;
As tho' one should find, In one soul and one mind,
With their pow'rs the four states of life mated.¶

DOHA 317

King Dasrath of Avadh rejoiced as he saw
His four sons sitting there with their wives,
As tho' he as king had achieved the four ways¶¶
And the four fruits† of all godly lives.

¶ The four stages of life, or four conditions of life, or four stages of consciousness.

¶¶ Service, Piety, Austerity, Faith.

† Righteousness, Wealth, Love, Release.

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CHAUPAI 330

As Rama was married, just so were the others;
The same rites were gone thro' for all the four brothers.

The sum of the dowry could never be told,
The pavilion was filled up with jewels and gold;

With blankets and shawls of the finest material;
Fine garments too fit, for wearers imperial;

Elephants, chariots, horses, retainers,
And cows golden-horned like to heav'nly sustainers;

And many more fine things were giv'n and received;
Once seen, only then, could the sum be believed!

The generous dowry was praised by earth's guards,
And Dasrath took gladly these noble awards.

Those asking were given at once their requests;
What was left to their quarters was moved for the guests.

Then Janak, the whole wedding duties completed,
Hands courte'usly folded, his guests he entreated.

CHHAND 36

To his guests all due honour, And praise as the donor
Of brides and their dowries, he paid;
Then the saints he addressed, Loving joy he confessed,
As obeisance he rev'rently made.

Then with head lowly bowed, in the sight of the crowd,
To the gods with hands clasped he thus prayed:
"Gods and saints need not love, Yet they seek it above;
"Ocean's need ne'er with drops is allayed."

In the same attitude, Pray'r he further pursued,
With his brother, to Kosala's king;
His friendliness proving, In words that were loving
And winsome, this plea did he bring:

"O King, friend and fond, This our mutual bond
"Will my prestige and kingdom enlarge;
"While I'm here at the helm, All that goes with my realm,
"At your service is placed, with no charge;

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"Now these girls for my sake, As your handmaidens take,
"Bring them up graciously as your own;
"Pray forgive my offence; You were called and now hence
"Are sent off—'tis presumptive, I own."

Again and again, In this courteous strain,
The great head of the Sun-Clan he hailed;
And a loving response, Was accorded at once—
To tell of it fitly I've failed.

Amid flow'r salutations, And loud gratulations,
King Dasrath returned to his quarters;
Glad songs and the noise, Of loud drums told the joys
Of the gods and their earthly supporters.

Then again songs were heard, As the priests gave the word
To the handmaidens ready and waiting,
Who then led each bride, With her man at her side,
To the Bridal-Hall, none hesitating.

DOHA 318

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

Again and again Sita looks at her Rama,
Her face, not her mind tho', averting,
With love-thirsty eyes that are restless and brighter
Than beautiful fish—more diverting.

CHAUPAI 331

She looks at his dark-hued and stalwart young frame,
Whose beauty would put countless Love-gods to shame;

His lotus-like feet brightened up with red paint
Would attract, like a bee, the pure soul of a saint;

The bright yellow loin-cloth his body adorning
Would outshine the lightning or young sun of morning;

His beautiful waist-band with little bells jingles;
Upon his big strong arms shine beautiful bangles;

A gold sacred thread added beauty imparts,
And the ring on his finger would ravish all hearts;

The jewels with which he as groom was invested,
Still shine on his heart, where before they had rested;

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A yellow scarf lies on his shoulders, its hems
On both borders are brilliant with rich pearls and gems;

Like the lotus his eyes; pendants hang from his ears;
And his face—beauty's storehouse, a face without peers;

His eyebrows are lovely, and charming his nose;
On his forehead a beautiful clear caste-mark shows;

A beautiful marriage-crown rests on his curls,
It is radi'nt and shining with fine gems and pearls.

CHHAND 37

The gems and the crown, And his body well-grown,
Won all onlookers' hearts, none dissenting;
With unfeigned delight, Women gazed at the sight,
And broke grass, evil chance thus preventing.

More clothes and gems bringing, With more happy singing,
The rite of the lamps they went thro';
While amid blossoms falling, Upon the gods calling,
The minstrels and bards praised him too.

As they entered the hall, The four couples and all
Their companions rejoiced even more;
With voices untiring, Love all hearts inspiring,
They carried thro' customs of yore.

The rice dish was brought; Gauri then Rama taught
How to take it; Sarda taught his bride;
All the ladies of court, Also shared in the sport,
In its joy with each other they vied.

Sita saw Rama's face, In an intimate place,
In the gems of the rings on her hand;
That the image might linger, She moved not a finger;
Such lovers such loss could not stand.

The pure love and passion, And fun in this fashion,
They shared was unspeakably great.
Then the couples just wed, To the guest-house were led
By the handmaids in glad married state.

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In the town ev'rywhere, Could be heard then the pray'r,
With thanksgiving, for blessing upon them:
"All good may heav'n give, And long years may they live,
"These fair couples, our eyes long feast on them."

Gods, hermits and saints, Then let loose all restraints;
Lifted loud their cries, on the Lord gazing;
Then gladsome in heart, They began to depart
For their realms, cries of Victory! raising.

DOHA 319

To their father the four happy princes then went,
With their wives their first visit to pay;
With glory and gladness the guest-house was filled,
With the flood 'twas nigh carried away.

CHAUPAI 332

King Janak then held for them all a great feast,
And called all the wedding guests, greatest and least,

The finest of carpets were spread on the earth,
As the king with his sons to the banquet set forth.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

Janak first of all rev'rently washed his guests' feet,
Before leading each one to his own worthy seat;

He first bathed the feet of great Avadh's great lord,
With such courteous love as one cannot record;

Then the lotus-like feet of Lord Rama he bathed,
Feet that in Siva's heart-folds are ever enswathed;

The three younger brothers like Rama were treated,
The king himself washed their feet where they were seated;

He then led each guest to the place that was fitting,
And sent for the servers when each one was sitting;

A dish shapened leaf-like, of precious stone made,
Fastened firm with gold pins, before each guest was laid.

DOHA 320

The capable, courteous cooks then at once
With the finest of food filled each dish;

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There was rice with rich spices and butter, as much
And as tasty as any could wish.

CHAUPAI 333

Five morsels¶ they offered and then began eating,
While bards jokes about them in song were relating;

More dishes were brought to them of-ev'ry kind;
For their richness and sweetness no words can one find;

Also sauces concocted by cleverest cooks,
And with names none could tell, nor could learn out of books.

The eatables brought were of all the four classes†
Of food, but their number description surpasses;

Among them were found the ordained flavours six,††
In each flavour the cooks many kinds tried to mix.

As they ate, women—taking the name of each guest—
Sang of each man and woman with humour and jest;

Again and again Dasrath, hearing some joke,
With his company laughed till the echoes awoke;

In this way they feasted till, hunger diminished,
They washed out their mouths and the banquet was finished.

DOHA 321

Then Janak to each guest the *pan*-leaf presented,
Completing thus all due formality;
And glorious Dasrath returned to the guest-house,
Delighted at such hospitality.

¶ The first five morsels are offered with five **mantras** directed to the five vital airs or breaths of the body, **viz.,** (1) for breathing, (2) for evacuation, (3) for circulation or vitality, (4) for brain or mental activity, and (5) for digestion.

† **Viz.,** (1) **bhakshya,** that which is bitten like bread, (2) **bhojya,** that which is chewed like rice, (3) **choshya,** that which is sucked like sugar-cane, and (4) **lehya,** that which is licked like sauce or honey.

†† **Viz., madhura** (sweet), **amla** (sour), **kashaya** (astringent), **tikta** (spicy), **katu** (bitter) and **lavana** (saltish).

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CHAUPAI 334

In th' city the day and night passed like a minute;
The people continu'lly found new joys in it.

When Dasrath awoke at the dawn, hopeful throngs
Of the mendicant uttered his praises in songs.

As he looked on his sons with their lovely young brides,
Joy untold seemed to flood his full heart from all sides.

Having finished his pray'rs, to his saintly consultant
He went, with a heart full of love and exultant;

Hands folded, he greeted the man he revered,
Then in sweet tones the thoughts of his heart he declared:

"It is by your kindness, O Kingly and Gracious,
"That now all my efforts have proved efficacious;

"So now, worthy lord, let the Brahmans be called
"And to all cows be giv'n, well-adorned, fitly stalled."

The saint praised the king and his generous hand,
Then he set out to call in the whole priestly band.

WEDDING OF RAMA AND HIS BROTHERS

DOHA 322

There came at his calling a number of holy
And expectant peripatetics,
Vamadev, Visvamitra, Valmiki, Jabali,
Narad, and such saintly ascetics.

CHAUPAI 335

The king gave them all a devout loving greeting,
Then led them to seats that were worthy their seating;

He sent for cows, four hundred thousand by count,
Like the Paradise Cow, nurture's gentle rich fount;

Each one was adorned with fine jewels and paint,
And then the king gave it with joy to a saint;

Then humbly for blessing he made his petition,
And said, "Life for me has today found fruition."

Their blessing receiving, with hope for eternity,
Next he called in all the begging fraternity;

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To each as asked he gave clothes, gems and gold,
Horses, elephants, chariots and all they could hold;

Departing, they praised him, his goodness, his line,
"All hail to the king of the Sun-Race divine!"

The wedding of Rama thus passed with rejoicing
Beyond e'en a thousand tongues heartiest voicing.

DOHA 323

Dasrath bowed at the feet of the saint Visvamitra,
With lowly and rev'rent regard,
As he said, "By the power of your kindly eye
"Have I found, O saint, this glad reward."

CHAUPAI 336

The day is thus spent; Dasrath lauds the great might
And the virtue of Janak—thus passes the night.

King Dasrath each day asks for leave to depart,
But King Janak says No! from the love of his heart.

Each day some new festival honour is planned,
Daily new entertainments are taken in hand;

The city each day new joys tries to achieve,
Not a one among them wishes Dasrath to leave.

Many days in these happy relations are passed;
In the cords of true love all the guests are held fast.

Visvamitra and Shatanand both at length come
And ask Janak to give his guests leave to go home:

"Pray, give to Dasrath your leave to return,
"Altho' for each other in love your hearts yearn."

The king for his ministers sent, acquiescing;
They came their respect and affection expressing.

DOHA 324

"Avadh's monarch," he said, "wishes now to depart;
"Thro' the palace at once give the word."
All the ministers, councillors, Brahmans and princes
By love were o'ercome when they heard.

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CHAUPAI 337

When the citizens heard that the party was leaving,
They asked, "Is it true?" the news hardly believing.

On hearing they really were going, their hopes
Sank and died, as the lotus at even-tide droops.

And then to the places where guests had been staying
Came many fine gifts of all kinds—no delaying;

There were all kinds of fruits, rich confections and sweets;
Lots of food—all description one's powers defeats;

Countless oxen were loaded and wagons were filled;
Many cooks were sent with them, as Janak had willed;

Twenty-five thousand cars; hundred thousand fine steeds,
Decorated and harnessed for looks and for needs;

Ten thousand bedecked elephants in their prime,
Seeing which earth's supporters¶ would blush ev'ry time;

Cows and buffaloes too; while things useful and precious,
As gold, gems and clothes, filled the wagons capacious.

RETURN TO AVADH

DOHA 325

Great dowries Videha gave thus with his daughters,
Their value could never be reckoned;
The world-rulers, seeing these presents, all thought
Their own treasures a very poor second.

CHAUPAI 338

The train being ready, King Janak gave orders
That all might set out for Avadh's distant borders.

Like fish without water, the queens began showing
Distress when they heard that their guests were now going;

They pressed Sita to their hearts, not once or twice,
But again and again, giving kindly advice;

¶ Massive elephants holding up the earth.

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"This our blessing—May you ever be the loved wife
"Of your husband, and happiness have all your life;
"To your parents-in-law and the priest be obedient."
"Your lord's pleasure follow by ev'ry expedient."

Her own sweet-voiced friends, grown up with her in beauty,
Advised her concerning a woman's chief duty.

The queens thus embraced and in love thus instructed
All four brides to wedded life newly inducted;

Their mothers said, holding them ere they departed,
"Why did God make women to be so soon parted?"

DOHA 326

Just then to the palace of Janak came Rama,
The pride of the great Solar Race,
With his brothers, to ask that the king give them all
His permission to leave now that place.

CHAUPAI 339

The townsfolk all eagerly ran at their chances
To look at these nat'rally handsome young princes;

Said one, "They are hoping to leave us today,
"Janak's made preparations to send them away;

"Let us gladden our eyes with a sight of the four
"Handsome princely young guests of our ruler once more.

"Who can tell for what former birth's virtue, the prize
"Has been given of these as the guests of our eyes?

"Like a living draught given to one nigh to death;
"Like the Tree of Life to a man starved from first breath;

"Like a hell-doomed soul led to the Lord's blessed feet,
"So to us is this vision—'tis heaven complete.

"Take to heart Rama's glory, the essence of good;
"Make his image the gem of your soul's serpent-hood."¶

¶ Fable says there is a priceless gem in the cobra's hood.

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The princes thus filled, as they went to the palace,
With joy the townsfolk's open eager eye-chalice.

DOHA 327

The sight of the youths and their manly perfection,
Moved all in the court with delight;
The brides' mothers gave many gifts in their joy;
O'er them held once more love's festal rite.

CHAUPAI 340

Seeing Lord Rama's beauty they all were o'erwhelmed;
Fell before him in rapture that could not be calmed;

Their love beyond telling drove from them all shyness,
Hearts drawn closer to his divine royal highness.

The four youths were bathed, rubbed with costly perfume,
And then fed with such food as the noblest consume,

Then Rama said, seeing the time opportune,
In a voice that was loving and modest in tone:

RETURN TO AVADH

"King Dasrath to leave now has made all provision,
"And sent us to ask from you also permission;

"So mothers, we ask that you kindly approve,
"Count us always your sons and your love ne'er remove."

The queens at these words could not utter a sound,
But were dumb from their grief and their love so profound;

Each bride they embraced closely, then made her over
With pray'r and with trust to her husband and lover.

CHHAND 38

The queen with words tender, In loving surrender,
Her Sita to Rama entrusted:
"My son, to the end, 'Tis on you I depend;
"You know all and your worth is well tested;

"To friends and relations, To folks of all stations,
"To me and the king Sita's dearer
"Than life; as your own, Take her now, her alone;
"In her loyal love none will be nearer.

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SORATHA 30

"In you are fulfilled all desires,
"Of all wisdom the crown and beloved by all,
"Sin's consumer in eternal fires,
"All men's virtues approving and source of all grace.

CHAUPAI 341

The queens with these words to his feet tightly clung,
While the quicksands of love seemed to smother each tongue.

Rama paid to his mother-in-law all respect
At her words, in which he all her love could detect;

With hands clasped and with many a reverent bow,
Their departure he asked her again to allow.

With final salutes and all blessed by the mothers,
Lord Rama departed along with his brothers.

The queens, all enshrining in heart and in will
His image, in love were now quiet and still;

They spoke to their daughters, with courage now facing
This parting, and each of them often embracing;

They'd take a few steps and then halt in their going,
Again would embrace, mutual love greater growing;

They stopped many times, sent the handmaids along,
And embraced—a cow's love for her calf is too strong.

DOHA 328

Love so overcame all the king's royal household,
And women and men of the city,
That Janak's town, Videha, seemed to become
The abode of sad parting and pity.

CHAUPAI 342

Even parrots and other tame birds of all ages,
That Janki had taught to speak, kept in gold cages,

Cried out, "Where is Sita?" all anxious and troubled,
Which hearing, the anguish of others was doubled.

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When poor beasts and birds were so troubled and flurried,
What wonder that humans were saddened and worried?

With his brother came Janak to share the good-byes;
Love was flooding his bosom and tears filled his eyes;

When he saw Sita leaving he lost all control;
For a time but a name was his strong patient soul;

He clasped his girl to him; it seemed by that token
The bounds of his courage and wisdom were broken;

His counsellors helped him with comforting thought;
Thus his feelings he checked, as he felt now he ought;

He clasped her again and again as they tarried,
And called for fine *palkies*, the brides to be carried.

DOHA 329

The whole royal fam'ly was moved with emotion;
Then seeing the moment auspicious,
The king placed the princesses each in her *palki*,
With pray'rs to Ganesh all-propitious.

RETURN TO AVADH

CHAUPAI 343

He gave to his daughters the counsel of wisdom,
On woman's chief duties and family custom;

He gave men and maid-servants trusty and loyal,
To Sita endeared, skilled in all service royal.

As Sita went on, the whole city was grieving,
But good signs and omens accomp'nied her leaving.

His guests, as they left him, King Janak escorted,
By Brahmans and counsellors courteous supported.

To sounds of loud music the party prepared
The chariots and animals, then forth they fared.

Dasrath called all the Brahmans and priests as he left,
And bestowed on them many an honour and gift;

The dust of their feet on his forehead he placed,
Asked their blessing—tho' king, himself gladly abased;

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Then, on Ganesh calling, their journey he started,
While many good omens came as they departed.

DOHA 330

Bright blossoms in showers fell down from the sky,
And the sound too of heavenly singing;
As Avadh's great king for his city set out,
All the air with earth's music was ringing.

CHAUPAI 344

He courte'usly dismissed the city's chief men,
And as courte'usly called mendicants up again;

Rich gifts both for pleasure and use he bestowed;
Had them stand with him, while his affection he showed.

They gave highest praise to his race and descent,
Then, with Rama enthroned in their hearts, homeward went.

Janak went with his guests, nothing seemed to dissuade him,
Tho' time and again Dasrath tried to persuade him;

At length, to his friend Dasrath spoke one last word,
"Pray return, you have come a long distance, my lord."

With these words, from his horse he dismounted and stood,
As his eyes overflowed again with love's warm flood.

Videha's lord, hands humbly folded, replied,
In a voice full of sweetness and void of all pride:

"Friend, how can I make of you any request,
"When the honour you've done me of being my guest?"

DOHA 331

The lord of Kosala, now closely related
With Janak, paid all honours owing;
In parting they clung to each other with humble
Affection, hearts full to o'erflowing.

CHAUPAI 345

Janak bowed to the saints, all most highly respected,
Receiving from each one the blessing expected.

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He then said farewell to his four sons-in-law—
Theirs a beauty and virtue that all hearts must draw;
Lotus-like his hands clasping before him, he said,
In a voice that his love over all hearers shed,

"My lord Rama, thy praise is beyond words of mine,
"O thou swan in the lake of all souls most divine;
"'Tis for thy sake ascetics their rigours endure,
"Giving up passion, pride, wrath and all that's impure:

"O thou lord all-indwelling, unseen, without end,
"Blissful; virtue's true source, thou dost virtues transcend;
"Nor by mind, nor by voice canst thou fully be known,
"Nor by wisdom, nor reason thy essence be shown;

"For thy greatness the scriptures give no sign or name;
"Thou hast been, art, and shalt be for ever the same.

DOHA 332

"To me has the vision been granted in thee,
"That with life's truest joys the soul blesses;
"The one to whom God Supreme shows gracious favour,
"The world's richest blessings possesses.

RETURN TO AVADH

CHAUPAI 346

"In ways beyond telling hast thou magnified me,
"And claiming me as thine own stood here beside me;
"Tho' ten thousand tongues I possessed, all divine;
"Tho' to write thro' unnumbered years be my design;

"Thy perfections, O Rama, I could not recite;
"The full sum of my blessings I could not indite;
"Whatever I say, this one thing is assuring—
"A little love pleases thee if 'tis enduring;

"Hands clasped, this one earnest petition I make,
"May my heart never stray, thy feet never forsake."
In these words by affection sincerely inspired,
Rama found for his heart all that could be desired;

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He paid Janak honours as great as his father,
Or saints Visvamitra and Vashishth could gather.

On Bharat then King Janak's gaze humbly fell,
He embraced him and blessed him, and bade him farewell.

DOHA 333

Then Lakshman and Shatrughna too he embraced,
And with blessings them on their way sped;
Their hearts were o'erwhelmed with their mutual love,
As they bowed to each other the head.

CHAUPAI 347

All compliments paid and all courtesies heeded,
The four brothers on their way homeward proceeded.

The king came to saint Visvamitra; embracing
His feet and their dust on his head and eyes placing,

He said, "Since to me, sir, you've granted your vision,
"For all good assurance have I, and provision;

"The joy and fame to which world-rulers aspire,
"Longing for it, tho' fearing to tell their desire,

"I that joy and that fame, sir, with ease have obtained;
"By the vision of you are such blessings attained."

His courtesies given and blessing thus earned,
King Janak at last to his palace returned.

The wedding procession its way homeward wended,
As all, great and small, in their happiness blended.

The villagers watching as Lord Rama passed
Were happy, eyes blest in their seeing at last.

DOHA 334

They halted at places and times that were fitting;
The people near by were delighted,
And then, on a day most auspicious, once more
Their own city, Avadh, they sighted.

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CHAUPAI 348

From all instruments then loudest music was played,
Loud the elephants trumpeted, loud horses neighed;

Tamborines, drums and cymbals were all gladly sounded,
The air with sweet clarion and pipe tones resounded.

The townsfolk excitedly heard the loud drumming
And music, they knew the procession was coming;

They all decorated their houses and porches,
Their markets and shops, streets and squares, gates and arches;

The roadways were watered and perfumed with spices,
Broad spaces were marked out with fancy devices;

Beyond count the flags, arches, pillars and banners,
Set up in all places in bright varied manners;

Areca-nut, plantain, mango and such trees,
With their fruit, were transplanted where all they would please;

Fresh and fruitful as soon as their roots touched the earth,
Trunks and branches adorned with bright gems of great worth.

RETURN TO AVADH

DOHA 335

Adornments most beautiful, varied and costly,
On ev'ry one's dwelling were rising;
The gods with Lord Brahma all praised Rama-town,
As they saw it so fair and surprising.

CHAUPAI 349

The heart of the Love-god was won as upon
The king's palace he looked where replendent it shone;

Bright auspicious omens—fair beauty, success,
True riches, true welfare and true happiness,

In abundance in King Dasrath's household appeared,
As tho' for the time they had bodies acquired,

In hopes to see Sita and Rama while there.
Say, who would not wish for a vision so fair?

Pretty women in bright happy comp'nies were seen,
Each a rival in grace to the Love-god's fair queen;

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They sang as they bore festal off'rings and lights;
Sarasvati seemed come many times for the sights.

In the palace so much eager clamour was raised,
That the joy of the people could not be appraised;

The queen-mothers all, at the thought of the boys,
Lost all sense of themselves in their love's common joys.

DOHA 336

Having finished their worship of Ganesh and Siva,
They gave to the priests handsome gifts;
They rejoiced as a beggar would when gain of life's
Four great goals all his beggardom lifts.¶

CHAUPAI 350

The mothers were so gripped by longing and love,
That their bodies were pow'rless, their feet would not move;

For a sight of their Rama they all were excited,
Their festival lamps they prepared to be lighted.

All kinds of sweet musical instruments played,
As Sumitra the festival salvers outlaid;

She placed in them *doob* grass, curds, buds, flowers, spice,
Betel nuts, *pan* leaves, savoury roots, grains of rice,

Yellow powder, young plant shoots, and lastly parched grain,
Then she spread them with bunches of *tulsi* again.

These salvers of gold were so handsomely dressed,
That each seemed for the bright Bird of Love a fit nest.

All scents of good omen, to fulfil good wishes,
The queens thus prepared in their festival dishes;

With their lamps and their offerings all well prepared,
For the welcome, with bright singing, forth they all fared.

¶ The four great goals of life are: (1) duty fulfilled, (2) wealth, (3) enjoyment and (4) final deliverance.

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DOHA 337

With gold salvers filled with their auspicious off'ring,
Each held in a lotus-like hand,
To the festal rites, graceful forms thrilled with emotion,
Departed the glad singing band.

CHAUPAI 351

The smoke clouds from incense were thick overhead,
As above in monsoon months dark rain clouds are spread;

White flowers in garlands were dropped from on high,
Like beautiful lines of white cranes in the sky;

Rare jewels, like Indra's bright rainbow in lustre,
Were hung up in many a festoon and cluster;

Fair maidens the housetops and windows were bright'ning,
Now seen, now gone—like fitful flashes of lightning;

Like thunder resounded the crash of loud drumming;
Like frogs, ducks and fowls, sounds from beggars were coming;

RETURN TO AVADH

The gods rained down flowers of sweetest perfume,
And the people were like dry fields springing to bloom.

At his master's command, when the moment had come,
Rama entered the city and thus arrived home.

To Siva and Parvati Dasrath gave thanks,
And rejoiced with full heart, as did all in his ranks.

DOHA 338

The gods poured down flowers 'mid omens of promise
And drum-beats of heavenly thunder;
The nymphs danced for joy and sang jubilant songs,
Till the heavens were nigh rent asunder.

CHAUPAI 352

Bards, minstrels and mimes; actors, poets and seers,
All sang praises to Him who illumines all spheres;

While victory cries and intoning of scripture
In ev'ry direction proclaimed worldwide rapture;

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Sweet music on all kinds of instruments made,
By the heavenly gods and the townsfolk was played.

Beyond words the glorious wedding procession;
Beyond words the joy that of all took possession.

To Dasrath the people paid homage sincerely;
Yet more their joy, seeing his son loved so dearly;

They gave gifts of clothing and gems rich and rare;
Bodies thrilled, eyes o'erflowed at a vision so fair;

Each citizen's wife waved her bright festal light,
And rejoiced as the four princes came within sight;

They lifted the curtains and, looking inside
The four *palkies,* were glad as they saw each fair bride.

DOHA 339

In this manner happiness giving to all,
They arrived at the chief palace gate;
The queens waved their welcoming lights o'er each bride
And each groom, to ensure blessed fate.

CHAUPAI 353

Their lights they kept swinging with gracefullest motion,
But could not find words for their loving emotion;

Fine jewels and clothing of ev'ry description
They gave out in numbers beyond all conception.

At the sight of their sons with their beautiful wives,
All the queen-mothers reached the chief joy of their lives;

Seeing Sita and Rama, the beautiful twain,
They rejoiced as do those who life's highest attain.

Her maidens in sweet songs their happy lot praised,
As again and again they at Sita's face gazed!

Each moment the gods rained down flow'rs in abundance,
They sang and they danced and they offered attendance;

Seeing four handsome young pairs in this family,
Sarda looked up ev'ry figure and simile,

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But none, among them all, adequate seemed;
So she dwelt on their charm, all her ardour this claimed.

DOHA 340

The queens sprinkled scent, laid down carpets, according
To scripture and family rites,
And led to the house, with their brides, the four princes,
Still waving their welcoming lights.

CHAUPAI 354

Each couple they led to a beautiful throne,
Each so gorge'us it seemed the Love-god's very own;

They seated each bridegroom and bride on their seat,
And then bathed with due honours each one's sacred feet;

With scriptural incense and lamp and oblation,
They paid them the reverence due to their station;

Again and again were the festal lights heaved,
O'er their heads fans and beautiful feathers were waved;

RETURN TO AVADH

Rich off'rings were offered, and costly gifts gifted,
The heart of each mother was wholly uplifted,

As tho' an ascetic attained the eternal,
Or one always ill found elixir supernal,

Or beggars the stone found that turns all to gold,
Or a blind man found sight all earth's charms to behold,

Or a dumb man were given a heavenly voice,
Or a soldier by victory made to rejoice.

DOHA 341

The joy was a full thousand million times greater
Than these, that o'erwhelmed the queen-mothers,
When to their home came again married the Pride
Of the House of Raghu and his brothers.

As the mothers performed the old customs, the youths
And their brides in their shyness were flustered;
But Rama smiled inwardly, seeing such love
And such happiness round them all clustered.

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CHAUPAI 355

Due homage was paid to their gods and forefathers;
Each wish was fulfilled that man's wishful heart gathers;

They prayed that the best of all boons might be granted,
The four brothers' welfare be firmly implanted.

The gods gave their unstinted blessings from heaven;
The queens, arms outspread, received all that were given.

The king called and gave those who shared in the wedding,
Fine jewels and vehicles, clothing and bedding;

Then getting permission from him to depart,
They returned, Rama's image enshrined in their heart.

The townsfolk in many a happy-voiced choir,
Went from house to house clad in their festal attire.

The beggars came also, his need each one showed,
What he asked for the king upon each one bestowed.

To each royal servant, each bard, each musician,
Was given with gifts courtesy's recognition.

DOHA 342

They all sang the praises of Dasrath their king,
For rich blessing upon him they prayed;
And then with his priests and preceptor, the king
To his palace his way once more made.

CHAUPAI 356

Thus Dasrath fulfilled, under Vashishth's direction,
All customs and scriptural rites to perfection.

The queen-mothers, seeing the great Brahman throng,
Rose in rev'rence and praised their good fortune in song.

The king planned ablutions for each honoured priest
And then rev'rently fed them a right royal feast;

With honours, with gifts and with love they were plied,
In return they all blessed him and left satisfied.

Special homage to saint Visvamitra he paid:
"Rev'rend sir, naught could equal my fortune," he said;

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With his queens, on the feet of the saint he laid hold,
Took the dust from them and his high virtues extolled;

In the palace he gave him a restful apartment;
The whole royal household served him, with courtly deportment;

Then bowed at their own guru's fair lotus-feet,
With the loving and humble respect that is meet.

DOHA 343

The princes, each one with his newly-wed bride,
And the king with his three lovely queens,
To the saint paid all reverence due, and his blessing
He gave them—'mid happiest scenes.

CHAUPAI 357

The king, with the humblest most loving professions,
Before the saint's feet placed his sons and possessions;

Naught but custom's dues would the saint ask or take,
But the blessings he gave truest riches would make;

In his heart Sita-Rama as comp'ny he took,
And with gladness returned to his own sacred nook.

RETURN TO AVADH

Brahman women and all his clan's elders, the king
Called and to them gave many a fine useful thing;

The women were called of his house and relations,
And all given garments befitting their stations;

To others, as need or as claim might require,
Costly presents were given, to each his desire;

High honours were granted to those most endeared
To the king, all those whom he most deeply revered.

The gods showered favours and praise at this blending
Of happiness as Rama's nuptials were ending.

DOHA 344

They all loudly beat on their drums, as each one
Made his way to his own heav'nly place;
Joy filled ev'ry heart as they talked to each other
Of Lord Rama's glory and grace.

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CHAUPAI 358

When thus he had rendered to all honours owing,
The heart of King Dasrath was full to o'erflowing.

At last he returned to his family quarters
And saw there his sons with their wives, now his daughters;

No wonder that love beyond telling should burn
In his heart, as each one he embraced in his turn;

His daughters he took to his bosom and blessed them,
And with all the love of his soul he caressed them.

At sight of the king and his children belov'd,
The whole household with happy emotion was moved.

And then as they listened, the joy of all mounted,
While Dasrath the whole wedding story recounted;

They heard him the virtues of Janak proclaim,
All his courteous love, his great riches and fame;

He told it as tho' with a bard's powers gifted;
The queens as they heard him with joy were uplifted.

DOHA 345

Then, he and his sons having bathed, the king called
His preceptor and those of his caste;
And with them partook of a feast; by this time
Of the night fully two hours had passed.

CHAUPAI 359

Lovely women sang to them sweet song after song,
In this way with great pleasure the night passed along;

Having washed hands and mouth, taken *pan,* ere they went
All with flowers were garlanded, sprinkled with scent;

Then, with heart at a last look at Rama upwelling,
Each bowed, asked permission and went to his dwelling.

The loving emotion, the greatness sublime,
And the charm of the company shown at this time,

By the voices divinest could never be told,
Nor by gods great or small, nor by scriptures of old;

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So attempts on my part must be always in vain;
Can a serpent of earth the earth's burden sustain?

Having rendered all honours that monarch could render,
The king to his queens spoke these words wise and tender,

"These girls to a strange home have come as our wards,
"Guard them well as the eyelid the eye always guards;

DOHA 346

"The lads too are sleepy and tired; let them all
"Go to rest now and sleep safe and sound."
Then, thinking of Rama, the king in his own
Resting-place his much needed rest found.

CHAUPAI 360

By the queens then for each one a beautiful bed,
Made of gold set with jewels, was quickly outspread

With mattress and covers of fine softest silk
As white and as soft as the froth of fresh milk,

And pillows—description all words would consume;
Garlands hung there whose scent filled the whole be-gemmed room;

RETURN TO AVADH

Over all jewelled lanterns and canopies shone;
One who saw it such beauty could know, he alone.

When all was prepared, on a bed soft as down
The queens lovingly first made young Rama lie down;

Rama time and again his three brothers requested
To leave him and go to bed, then they too rested.

The queens, seeing Rama's dark slender young body,
Put to him a question which love must needs study:

"By what means, dear son, as you went on your way,
"Were you able the dread monster Tarka to slay?

DOHA 347

"How could you slay vicious Marich and Subahu,
"Those demons who make it their boast
"That none do they fear; how could such dreadful warriors
"Be conquered, with all their dread host?

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CHAUPAI 361

"'Twas by the saint's favour, my son, I assure you,
"That God could remove ev'ry hindrance before you;

"By this useful lore you two brothers collected,
"And by this the saint's sacrifice you protected;

"By this, as the world knows, the hermit's poor wife,
"At the touch of the dust of your feet, came to life;

"Siva's bow, hard as tortoise-shell, by this you broke
"Before kings, with a noise that the whole world awoke;

"By this world-wide vict'ry and glory you earned
"With dear Sita—and married you all have returned;

"Beyond all human powers was ev'ry such deed;
"Only by Visvamitra's grace could you succeed.

"Wholly fruitful our birth has become, by his grace,
"In this world, since again we see your moon-like face;

"The days you were gone, to us should not be reckoned
"As part of our life, by the Lord, not one second."

DOHA 348

Young Rama replied in words modest and soft,
That their questioning minds could compose;
Then with thoughts on the Brahmans, his master and Siva,
He closed his tired eyes in repose.

CHAUPAI 362

His face, as he lay there in slumber reposing,
Was like a fair lotus at sunset half-closing.

The women were still in each home wide awake,
Throwing jests at each other in glad give-and-take.

The queens to each other said, "Look, dear, tonight
"The whole city is brilliant, unusually bright."

Enclasping the brides in their arms, the queens slept,
As might serpents who thus their gems guarded and kept.

The cocks crowed as morn fresh and clear o'er them broke;
With the light and their welcome Lord Rama awoke.

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Bards and minstrels their voices in God's praises blent;
To the gates townsfolk came with respectful intent.

Morning greetings to pay and be bless'd, the four brothers
Called on priests and gods, teacher, father and mothers;

The queens, looking on them found joy even more,
As the lads with their father all went to the door.

DOHA 349

Altho' they by nature were pure, they performed
In the fair sacred stream their ablutions,
And then they returned to the house and the king,
Having finished their morning devotions.

CHAUPAI 363

The king, when he saw them, his blessing repeated,
Embraced them, and then at his word they were seated.

At sight of their Rama the whole court exulted;
They knew from the sight truest blessing resulted.

Saint Vashishth and saint Visvamitra then came,
And to seats both were led worthy of their great fame;

RETURN TO AVADH

With his sons, the saints' sacred feet Dasrath adored,
While the saints both rejoiced, seeing Rama their lord.

Then Vashishth told them stories that faith must revere,
While the king and his household gave reverent ear;

And of saint Visvamitra's great deeds too, at last,
He told stories that even a saint's thoughts surpassed;

Vamadev declared also these things were all true,
That their wonder and fame spreads the whole wide world thro'.

Radiant joy moved all hearers, but that which proceeded
From Rama and Lakshman all others exceeded.

DOHA 350

As day after day in this manner was passed,
With their festive delights never ceasing,
The people of Avadh all shared in the blessing,
Their happiness ever increasing.

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CHAUPAI 364

When time was auspicious, they loosened the bands
On the wrists of each one, as glad custom demands,¶

The gods saw new reasons for joy each new morn,
And asked Brahma that they might in Avadh be born.

Visvamitra his wish to depart would declare,
But Lord Rama's warm courteous love held him there.

As day after day the king's virtue and merit
He saw, the saint lauded his fine noble spirit;

At last when he asked leave to go, the king said,
Standing up with his sons at his side as he pled,

"All I have, sir, is yours, since from you all derives;
"Your true servant am I, with my sons and my wives;

"Bless me with your vision at times,—yea, and ever
"I pray you to grant to these young lads your favour."

These words having said, at the saint's feet he lay
With his wives and his sons, and no more could he say.

The saint, having given his blessing, set forth
On his way; beyond telling their love and its worth.

RETURN TO AVADH

Rama and his young brothers escorted their guest
For a way, then returned homeward at his behest.

DOHA 351

Visvamitra, the full moon of Gadhi's great race,
Went his way, oft in joy his voice raising;
The joys of the wedding, the king's warm devotion,
And Rama's fair beauty still praising.

CHAUPAI 365

Vamadev and Vashishth, learned household guides, hailed
Visvamitra's great worth and his doings retailed;

¶ A band containing things of good omen bound on before the wedding and removed later.

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As he heard the saint's story, the king felt the power
Of all his good deeds, bearing fruit in that hour.

At length he dismissed all the people around,
And went forth from the hall with his sons, palace-bound.

Wherever men met with each other, or walked,
Of the marriage and glory of Rama they talked.

From the day he returned to his home newly-wed,
Over Avadh new joy and continu'l was shed.

The delight of this wedding, a full-flowing fount,
Not the voices divinest could ever recount.

The source of all bliss—Sita-Rama's fame—knowing,
Most sacred, on poets their true life bestowing,—

I've told of it thus far in verse and in song,
That thereby I may cleanse and make holy my tongue.

CHHAND 39

Rama's glory and fame, I—poor Tulsi—proclaim,
That my tongue I may thus sanctify;
But what poet or verse, This great sea can traverse
Of his deeds? All one's gifts they defy!

VISVAMITRA RETURNS

How he donned sacred thread, And was happily wed,
If with rev'rence we hear or we sing,
In whatever the place, Sita-Rama's great grace
To our souls joy eternal will bring.

SORATHA 31

To him who will sing or will tell,
With true love of the wedding of Rama and Sita,
A full inexhaustible well
Of delight will be opened—such is Rama's glory.

HERE ENDS THE FIRST BOOK
NAMED CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH,
The First Stairway
of the Lake of Lord Rama's Life and Deeds,
which destroys all evil of this Evil Age.

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INTERPOLATION

The Interpolation, given by Growse and taken from some later MSS, covering Dohas173 to181 and Chaupais 183 to 189, is as follows:

When Narad met him, he (Ravan) said with a smile: "Saint, "where are the gods? Show them to me." Narad was not pleased to hear of his villainy, and forthwith sent him to White-land. When he crossed the ocean and arrived on the other side, he saw a company of women and said to them: "Go tell your husbands that the king of "the demons is here; then I will conquer them in battle and take you "away to my own home." On hearing this speech an ancient dame waxed wroth, and ran and seized him by the feet and threw him up into the air; then after going a long way scratching and clawing, she gave him a good shake and pitched him with great violence into the middle of the sea. Senseless, but by Brahma's blessing still alive, he sank down into hell; then with a roar sprang up again all unhurt, with a soul unmoved either by joy or sorrow.

After taking and pillaging the Naga's capital, the enemy of heaven passed on to Bali's realm. When the Dwarf heard of Ravan's coming and how he had scoffed at Narad, the gods' teacher, the lord infused his own strength into all the children playing in the streets, who ran and seized him (Ravan) and brought him into the town, while every man and woman in the place flocked to see the sight. "Where on "earth can heaven have brought such a creature from, with its twenty "arms and ten heads?" Though the guards bound him and vexed him sore, he would rather die than tell his name; in the Dwarf's presence he was much confounded, and the Merciful then had him set at liberty. Off at once rushed the demon king without the least shame or hesitation. Shameless, pitiless, and ever bent on mischief, the Ten-headed thought to conquer Rama. Hearken, Bharadvaja, if God is wroth with a man, his diamonds turn to bits of glass that are not worth a cowrie.

Wherever he found a stray god or Brahman, he frightened him into payment of ransom, and this is the way he went on day and night, the black-bearded ruffian. Then in haste he came to Pampapur, the seat of the monkey-king Bali, and beheld the beautiful lake that would charm the soul even of the greatest saint, where the monkey-king

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sat absorbed in contemplation. He smiled to see the Ten-headed, and Ravan shouted in a fury, "You wretched, senseless, hypocritical "ape, I no sooner heard your name than I came at once; have done "with your cowardice and meet me in battle. Unless you can vanquish "me in combat, your meditations are vain," said the demon king, gnashing his 320 teeth. Said Bali, "Away, I want no fighting; be "wise and take your ten heads home. Your valour, friend, is undis- "puted, for I hear of your victories all over the world." But Bali's reiterated advice had not the slightest effect; and at last the monkey-king sprang up in a rage and seized Ravan and nipped him tight under his arms, and then forgot all about him for the space of ten months. One day as he raised his hands to offer libation to the sun, Ravan slipped out of his clutches and ran away.

INTER-POLATION

Next he went, being still without either shame or scruple, to where the thousand-armed Sahasrabhuj was sporting in the water. Ocean was troubled at Ravan's might; the court began to sink and Sahasra-bhuj cried in a rage, "What rival of mine is here today?" Then he went and saw where Ravan stood, by whose giant arms the water was agitated. Potent in artifice as in strength of limb, he with a loud cry seized the king of Lanka and kept him tied up for some days in his stable, a sight of wonder for his wives. He (Ravan) was ashamed to tell his name, though the wise king was ever asking, and Rambha and her companions danced about him and set a lighted torch to each of his ten heads. Then saint Pulastya came and set him free.

Next he went and got cursed by Nala. On the road he spied a most incomparably beautiful damsel, with sandal-wood and flowers and leaves in her hand, going to worship Tripurari. Urvasi was abashed at seeing him but Ravan addressed her in gentle tones, "Who "are you, lady, and where are you going?" She was too much over-come with modesty to give him an answer. Being mad with lust, he took no heed, but seized her by the hand, though she was the wife of Kuver's son. When he recognised her, there came upon him remorse and repentance for the evil deed (Kuver was his own half-brother), and much troubled at heart the king of Lanka returned to his own capital. Urvasi went sadly to Alaka and told Nala-Kuvar. In great wrath he uttered this curse, "May the race of Ravan perish." The curse went to Lanka where Ravan was seated and stood before him,

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He trembled with dismay at the sight. Submitting to the curse, he thought within himself that he had never taken any tribute from the monks; so in a fury, he sent four messengers to a holy man's hermitage, who on seeing them forgot all about the Supreme Spirit and asked them of their welfare, saying, "Tell me, is all well with Lanka's "king?" "Reverend sir, all is well with him, and he wants your "tribute-money." On hearing this speech he was much alarmed, and forgetful of his vow began to think within himself, "It is ill going "empty-handed to a court where justice is not, and where a pack of "villains are banded together." So he gave them a jar, which he had filled with blood taken from his own body, and made it over to the messengers, saying, "Go, tell the king, if the jar is opened death will "come upon you and your family." The messengers in haste took the jar to the king's court at Lanka. Ravan was pleased at the sight of the jar, and the messengers then told him what the saint had said. On hearing the curse his heart burned within him, and he said, "Take "the jar far away to the north and carefully put it in the ground "where no one can find it." They took it to Janak's dominions and there buried it in a field. There Janak, preparing for a sacrifice, was driving a golden plough; the offspring of the saint's blood sprung up out of the furrow and was carried off by Garur (the heavenly vulture). Her blessed name was at first Janaki, but Narad afterwards came and directed that it should be Sita (the word Sita meaning "furrow"), and explained all the circumstances as above related. The great saint then left; the messengers also returned to Lanka; and Lanka's land, though worsted in four places, still greatly troubled the gods....Many were the lovely dames he wedded after conquest, daughters of gods and Yakshas and Gandharvas and men and Kinnaras and Nagas.

(Interpolation ends, and story continues.)

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BOOK II—EVENTS IN AVADH

(Happiness and Tragic Sorrow in Avadh City and Kingdom)

Sanskrit Invocation and Praise

1. He on whose left shines the mountain princess, from whose
head springs Ganges, divine river;
Who as signs shows on his brow the new moon, drug stain
on his throat and snake as sacred thread;
He adorned with streaks of ash, the lord of gods
and of all beings, the Unchanging;
Like the moon in hue; destroyer; Siva, Omnipresent
Lord! Me ever do thou guard.

2. He who showed no pleasure when anointed king,
nor sorrow at his exile to the forest,
I adore him, Raghunandan; may the glory of his
lotus-face forever bless me;

3. He with body dark and tender as the lotus
blossom, and with Sita on his left hand,
He who bears with grace the bow and arrow in his
hand, the glori'us monarch of Raghu's line.

INVOCATION

DOHA 1

With dust from my own guru's lotus feet cleanse I,
All filthiness from my mind's mirror,
And praise Rama's spotless renown that assures me
All good, as it frees me from error.

CHAUPAI 1

From the time Rama came to his home newly wed,
All around daily new joys and pleasures were spread;
The fourteen created realms seemed like great mountains,
And bliss-showers fell from good deeds like cloud fountains;
True wealth and success with full unhindered motion
Flowed onward to Avadh as streams to the ocean;

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The town's men and women, like gems of great worth
And great beauty, were noble in life as in birth.

The city's perfection surpasses all telling;
It seemed the Creator in pow'r was excelling;

The people in all things found happiest blessing,
The vision of Rama's face always possessing;

The queen-mothers, with ev'ry friend and handmaiden,
Rejoiced at the vine of their hopes so fruit-laden;

Young Rama, so handsome, so good and so gifted,
The king saw and heard of, his heart thus uplifted.

DOHA 2

The people were all with one longing inspired,
Which to Siva in pray'r they expressed;
That the king, while still living, young Rama as heir
With the kingdom and pow'r would invest.

CHAUPAI 2

One day the king sat in a royal durbar,
With officials and nobles from near and from far;

In him worthy deeds seemed to reach fullest height;
Of the virtues of Rama he heard with delight;

Ev'ry other king looked for his grace and support,
And the gods themselves all seemed his favour to court.

Where'er thro' the worlds or thro' time one's mind fared,
Not a one could in fortune with him be compared,

Having Rama as son, source of all that is good;
Words could never be found this to tell as one should.

The king took up his mirror, as oft he had done,
And looked in it a moment to straighten his crown;

Thus he saw whitened hairs gath'ring over his ears;
There they spoke as the voice of his now advanced years:

"Let Rama, O king, now be set on the throne,
"And your own birth and life its fulfilment thus own."

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DOHA 3

So with this as the thought and intent of his heart,
On a suitable day and occasion,
He went to his counsellor, and with deep joy
And love, told him of this his persuasion.

CHAUPAI 3

To the saint he said, "O best and wisest of men,
"Rama's fitted, all things in his power and ken;

"Ev'ry citizen, minister, helper or servant,
"To me friend or foeman, indiff'rent or fervent,

"To all of them Rama is dear as to me,
"And in him truest blessing embodied they see;

"All the priests and their families, reverend sir,
"Just as you, upon him their affections confer.

"Those who bow in the dust at the feet of their lord,
Others to them all glory and power accord;

"None in bliss is my equal the whole wide world thro';
"To your graciousness answ'ring my meekness 'tis due;

PLANS FOR RAMA'S CORONATION

"Just one wish unfulfilled in my heart yet remains;
"This can also be done if your grace so ordains."

The saint was well pleased at this loving demand,
And replied, "O king, give me your royal command.

DOHA 4

"Your name and your fame are the capable givers
"Of all your good wishes, O king;
"O gem of all rulers, the fruit of your wish
"Follows on as the natural thing."

CHAUPAI 4

Thus seeing his counsellor willing and pleased,
All the thoughts of his heart the king gladly released:

"Kindly send out the word that the council be called,
"And let Rama as ruler at once be installed;

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"Let this glad thing happen while still I am living,
"Which bliss to all eyes will for ever be giving.

"Great Siva does all things, my lord, by your favour;
"With this wish fulfilled, I shall know peace forever;

"I'll not worry whether I live or have sentence
"Of death, for no cause will remain for repentance."

At these words of Dasrath, which glad hope instilled,
With new joy was the heart of the saintly one filled:

"He whose anger brings grief and remorse," he replied,
"He whose worship neglecting dire woe must betide,

"That Lord Rama, O king, he the Most Holy One,
"The All-loving, has deigned to be born as your son.

DOHA 5

"Let there be no delay, but as ruler at once
"Give the order and make preparations;
"The council call quickly; the day Rama's given
"The throne will bring high celebrations."

CHAUPAI 5

The king called at once, when he came to his dwelling,
For Sumant, his minister, gladness upwelling.

"All honour, O king!" Sumant said as he bowed;
Then the thoughts of his heart the king uttered aloud:

"Today did the saint his mind gladly declare,
"That prince Rama be given the throne as the heir;

"If the council approves let a day be appointed,
"And joyously Rama as king be anointed."

At this was Sumant with fresh gladness inspired;
Like a well-watered plant was the thing he desired;

With hands humbly clasped thus he made his petition,
"Long years may you live, sir, in happy condition;

"A blessing to all is the plan you have made,
"Let it be done at once, my lord, not be delayed."

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Well pleased was the king when these thoughts he was told,
As a creeper grows strong on strong boughs laying hold.

DOHA 6

"Whatever the orders," he said, "that are given
"By Vashishth, the saint and devout,
"To carry thro' Rama's anointing as king
"And installing—be those carried out."

CHAUPAI 6

Vashishth said in tones that were eager and lowly,
"Bring water from all places sacred and holy;

"Bring all kinds of spices, of flowers and fruits,
(Each one naming) "and all kinds of herbs and of roots;

"Finest feathers and fans, skins of every kind;
"Woven cloth, silk and wool; clothes—the best you can find;

"Bring us all kinds of jewels and auspicious things
"That the world thinks should serve the anointing of kings."

PLANS FOR RAMA'S CORONATION

In detail he gave things ordained in the scriptures,
And said, "Put up varied and beautiful structures;

"Have planted along the streets fruit-bearing trees,
"Mango, betel-nut, plaintains, with fruit that will please;

"With the finest of gems mark out beautiful squares;
"Ask the people to decorate all the bazaars;

"Worship Ganesh, your family priests for their worth,
"And the gods; serve all Brahmans as lords of the earth.

DOHA 7

"Have flags, banners, arches and pillars prepared,
"Also elephants, chariots and horses."
The people accepted these orders and gladly
Began work with all their resources.

CHAUPAI 7

The work that the saint asked of each to be done,
By each person that work as the first was begun.

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The king honoured Brahmans, saints, each divine being,
Sure hope of the welfare of Rama thus seeing.

As news of the coming enthronement went round,
Happy music and greetings began to resound;

And both Sita and Rama, by throbs in the side
Of the body—good omens—knew good would betide.

A-thrill with their love they said one to the other,
"This means the return of dear Bharat, our brother;

"Long days, since he visiting went, have gone by;
"All these signs say a dear one's arrival is nigh;

"To us in this world none than Bharat is dearer;
"The signs mean he's coming, each day getting nearer!"

His brother was in Rama's heart day and night,
As a turtle yearns over her eggs out of sight.

DOHA 8

The news of the crowning moved all the fair ladies
Of court with the gladdest emotion;
As, seeing the full moon in all its bright glory,
Joy uplifts the waves of the ocean.

CHAUPAI 8

The ones who first brought to the palace the news,
Received jewels and clothing, the best they could choose.

The queens were all thrilled with love, all gladsome-hearted:
At once plans for great decorations they started;

Sumitra laid many a beautiful square,
Made of all kinds of precious stones, costly and rare;

Rama's mother, exulting in thoughts of her boy,
Called the Brahmans and gave them large gifts in her joy;

To the gods of heav'n, nature and household she prayed,
With her off'rings and promises now to them made:

"By means Rama's welfare forever assuring,
"Pray bless us, upon us your mercy outpouring."

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Fawn-eyed, moon-faced women, in glad tones and words,
Sang bright songs—voices theirs like the sweetest of birds.

DOHA 9

The news of Lord Rama's anointing as king
Warmed the heart of each woman and man;
At once, thinking out the most suitable ways,
They their festive adorning began.

CHAUPAI 9

The king called Vashishth, him to Rama he sent,
To inform and prepare him for this great event.

When of Vashishth's arrival Prince Rama was told,
Low he bowed as he met him upon the threshold;

He sprinkled pure water as indoors he led him,
Then honour in all prescribed manners he paid him;

With Sita the feet of his teacher he grasped,
And then rev'rently said, with his hands humbly clasped:

"When comes to the house of a servant his master,
"It brings greatest good and averts all disaster;

PLANS FOR RAMA'S CORONATION

"By custom more fitting 'twould be if some word
"Had been sent calling me to come to you, my lord;

"But in love to your dignity paid you no heed,
"And my house by your presence is holy indeed.

"Your wishes now tell me, my master, I pray you,
"And I as your servant at once will obey you."

DOHA 10

At these words of Rama so full of affection,
The saint highly praised and extolled him;
"By right as the light of the Sun-Race most bright
"You speak courte'usly, Rama," he told him.

CHAUPAI 10

The saint, praising thus Rama's fine disposition,
For love giving love, gladly told of his mission:

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"The king now as ruler intends to appoint you,
"And plans he is making as king to anoint you;

"By pray'r and abstention begin now preparing,
"That all may go thro' with success and fine faring."

The saint with these words to King Dasrath returned;
Consternation seized Rama at this he had learned;

"Born together, we brothers share all things," he said,
"All our lives with each other we've eaten, slept, played;

"Together ears pierced, sacred thread donned and married,
"As one and together thro' all things were carried;

"Must I in our spotless line one flaw now own,
"That the eldest without the rest come to the throne?"

The lord's sorrowing love at this thing so adverse
Will remove from devoted hearts all thoughts perverse.

DOHA 11

At the moment Lakshman came in, by his gladness
And love all uplifted and thrilled;
And Rama, the moon to the lotus-like Sun-Race,
Gave welcome, himself with love thrilled.

CHAUPAI 11

By sweet music on instruments played of all kinds,
The whole city reveals the untold joy it finds;

All pray for the hast'ning of Bharat's arrival,
That eyes, seeing him, may find happy revival;

In markets and shops, homes and places of meeting,
With these words the people give mutual greeting:

"Oh, hasten the day with its moment propitious,
"When all hopes will find their fulfilment auspicious,

"When this blessed vision our eyes shall behold
"Of our Rama with Sita set on thrones of gold."

While they in bright hopes of tomorrow were basking,
Perverse gods in envy for hindrance were asking;

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No hope or joy found they in Avadh's great pleasure;
Bright moons do not please thieves who seek stolen treasure!

They sought Sarasvati, their pray'rs they presented,
Oft falling before her like persons demented:

DOHA 12

"O mother," they prayed, "do thou act to remove
"The distresses of which we now tell;
"If Rama will give up the throne and go off
"To the forest, for us 'twill be well."

CHAUPAI 12

The goddess was pained at the gods' pray'rful sallies,
"A frosty night I," she said, "to beds of lilies."

The gods, seeing this, said, as efforts they doubled,
"In this, mother, no blame is yours; why be troubled?

"The nature of Rama you very well know,
"Far removed he from pleasure's or sorrow's vain show;

PLANS FOR RAMA'S CORONATION

"Their deeds doom all creatures to joy or to sorrow;
"For us go to Avadh—at once, not tomorrow."

Her feet they oft clasped, hard they pressed and persuaded;
She yielded, deploring their minds so degraded:

"So high their abode; yet so base are their ways,
"That they cannot endure others' glory and praise."

Then she said, with her thoughts upon coming events,
Scribes and poets will seek me and bless my intents.¶

Then went she to Dasrath's town, thus her heart gladdened,
An eclipse by which hearts were troubled and saddened.

DOHA 13

She chose hump-backed Manthara, handmaid of Bharat's
Own mother, Kaikeyi the queen;
She poisoned her mind, filled her full of all mischief,
And then she returned all unseen.

¶ An Indian commentator says: For the theme given by what she is about to do and its great outcome.

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CHAUPAI 13

The maid saw the city so well decorated,
Heard music and songs, saw the people elated;

She asked what was happ'ning, why all were so jolly;
They said, "Rama's crowning!" In envious folly

This low-born, mean-spirited woman then thought,
"By tonight how can these things be all brought to naught?"

She looked round like a jungle-tribe woman who roams
The woods, seeing and wanting the best honey-combs;

She sought Bharat's mother and came to her wailing;
"What now has gone wrong?" said Queen Kaikeyi, smiling;

No word the maid answered, but stood glum and sighing,
Then woman-like shed tears with sobbing and crying;

The queen laughing said, "You're an impudent minx,
"Lakshman's taught you a much-needed lesson, methinks."

But the maid, evil-minded, still answered no word,
Simply stood like a poisonous snake breathing hard.

DOHA 14

The queen was now worried; said, 'Why don't you speak?
"Is our Rama not well, or the king?
"Bharat, Lakshman, or Shatrughna?" Even more pain
To the hunchback did these questions bring.

CHAUPAI 14

"My lady," she said, "why should I lessons need?
"Could I dare to be impudent ever indeed?

"And with whom is all well if not Rama alone,
"When today the king promised to give him the throne?

"'Tis on Kausalya God's greatest favours abide;
"Seeing her, none can hope for or come to such pride.

"Go and see how the city is gay and rejoices,
"Which seeing my heart knows the pain it now voices;

"You've no thought for Bharat away at this hour,
"Tho' you well know you have the king fast in your pow'r;

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"Foolish drowsy one, thinking of bed and of sleep!
"Don't you see the king's treacherous, crafty and deep?"

Her maid's perverse mind with her loving words knowing,
The queen to her answered, her feigned anger showing,

"If once more you say things upsetting and wrong,
"Things that break up good homes, I will cut out your tongue!"

DOHA 15

But knowing that people one-eyed, lame or hunchback,
Are often perverse, wicked, vile,
And especially women, much more so if servants,
Kaikeyi went on with a smile:

CHAUPAI 15

"A lesson I've given you, all my love in it;
"I could not be angry with you for a minute!

"The day will be blessed and fine when comes true
"The great thing which I've heard at this moment from you.

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

" 'Tis an unchanging law of the great Solar Race,
"That the elder son rules, younger takes helper's place;

"If tomorrow our Rama as ruler is crowned,
"Then whatever you ask I'll give, wherever found!

"I know Rama loves ev'ry one of us mothers;
"As Kausalya nat'rally dear are the others;

"Indeed 'tis on me that his special love rests;
"Well I know, for I've proved it by love's many tests.

"Oft I pray that if God should again give me life,
"May my son be like Rama, like Sita his wife;

"For to me Rama's dearer than life and its stores;
"Why then should his enthronement bring grief such as yours?

DOHA 16

"For my Bharat's sake do I demand; tell me truly,
"Without further fraud or concealing,
"In time of such happiness what is the cause
"Of your bitterness, grief and ill-feeling?"

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CHAUPAI 16

Said the maid, "I've said once what I had in my mind;
"With a diff'rent tongue diff'rent words too I might find;

"I should have my head smashed in; it's what I deserve;
"I have hurt you with words kindly meant; what a nerve!

"But the folks who are false, who the truth twist and bend,
"Lady, they win your love, while I only offend;

"I too now will speak just to please you and flatter,
"Or else I'll keep silent and stop all my chatter.

"By God to this body deformed I'm subjected;
"We reap as we've sown—only that is expected.

"What diff'rence to me which one chosen has been
"For the throne? Shall I cease to be slave and be queen?

"It is better that I and my nature be burnt,
"Since I cannot endure, of your loss having learnt;

"So forgive me, my queen, I've said more than I should,
"Having said those few things that I thought for your good."

DOHA 17

A weak-minded woman, the queen—by the gods
Now deluded—these fair words believed;
They were words of an enemy thought to be friend,
And in deep crafty falsehood conceived.

CHAUPAI 17

Now respectful, she asked many things, drawn along
Like a deer which a jungle girl draws with her song.

The mind always follows the way fate is leading;
The handmaid was pleased at her plan now succeeding;

"You ask me," she said, "but to tell I'm afraid;
"Mischief-maker's the name you have given your maid!"

She spoke to win trust, no regret or compunction,
To Avadh like Saturn in evil conjunction:

"Dear to you are Sita and Rama, my queen,
"Rama loves you—'tis true, tho' that's yet to be seen,

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"But the days that were with us are with us no more,
"And occasion makes foes of those friendly before.

"True, the sun is to lotuses life's divine source,
"But if water fails, by it they're scorched in due course.

"Your rival queen wishes at once to uproot you;
"Now water yourself with some plan that will suit you.

DOHA 18

"No heed have you paid; as his favourite you
"Think your hold on the king strong and ample;
"But tho' he's fair-spoken, his heart is most evil,
"While yours is so trustful and simple.

CHAUPAI 18

"The mother of Rama is deep and she's clever;
"She sees she can fix things up now and forever;

"Thro' her to his grandmother's Bharat was sent;
"She is no-wise your friend, not in deed, nor intent;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT.

"She has said, 'My dear sister queens serve as they should,
" 'All except proud Kaikeyi, who thinks she's too good.'

"Kausalya in craft and deceit is so zealous,
"She lets no one see that of you she is jealous;

"She sees the king give you his chief love and care,
"Which is more than your rival can possibly bear;

"So she's got the king under her thumb by her tricks,
"And for Rama's anointing the day made him fix.

"Rama rightly by family law gets the crown;
"All are pleased, so am I! Should I grumble or frown?

"Yet on looking ahead, I confess I'm afraid;
"But what kind heaven sends, that on all will be laid."

DOHA 19

In this way did Manthara work on Kaikeyi
With many a false thought and word;
She told countless stories of such jealous rivals,
Until the queen's anger was stirred.

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CHAUPAI 19

The queen, gripped by fate, her maid trusted, on oath
She then put her, demanding she tell the whole truth.

Said the maid, "Why ask me? You must see how things go;
"Their own good or their harm even birds and beasts know!

"Have you only today learned from me what is planned?
"Preparations have been two whole weeks now in hand!

"In your service always I've found food and clothing;
"I must tell the truth and avoid shame and loathing;

"If I try to catch you with falsehood and lies,
"Upon me may fit punishment fall from the skies.

"If tomorrow Prince Rama is given the crown,
"Then for you will the seed of misfortune be sown;

"This line drawing, I swear, lady, with all my pow'r;
"Just a fly in a milk bowl you'll be from that hour;

"If you and your son will consent to be menial,
"Your presence will then, only then, be congenial.

DOHA 20

"As one wife of Kashyap¶ subjected the other
"By tricks, so will Kausalya you;
"While Lakshman will be Rama's minister, Bharat
"Will be but a slave of those two."

CHAUPAI 20

The queen, these words hearing so harsh and so bitter,
Could say naught, but sat in a dump helpless flutter;

Her body perspired and like plantain leaves trembled;
The maid changed her tone and concern she dissembled;

She told to her mistress false tales by the score,
Urging courage and steadfastness like those of yore.

In this way her hold on the queen's will she tightened,
Who then, like dry twisted wood, could not be straightened.

¶ An old-time patriarch.

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This evil one, by fate's queer turn, became "darling,"
As tho' one should praise as a swan a mere starling.

The queen said, "'Tis true, my dear, true as the morning;
"My right eye by throbbing has given me warning;

"Each night I am troubled by dreadful bad dreams,
"But I've not told you of them, which now foolish seems;

"There is naught I can say, I of reason bereft,
"And so simple—I don't know my right from my left.

DOHA 21

"Oh, never in any way up to this time
"Have I thought to do any one harm;
"Then for what sin has heaven sent me all at once
"So much suff'ring and cause for alarm?

CHAUPAI 21

"I can't live as slave to a rival wife; rather
"I'll go home and spend my days with my own father;

"If fate should my life and my destiny give
"Into enemy hands, better die then than live!"

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Much more said Kaikeyi, upset and harassed,
While the maid, woman-like, by fresh wiles held her fast:

"My queen why speak thus, mind so worried and troubled;
"Your wifely joys daily can grow and be doubled;

"While those who for you those things plotted and sought
"To the place where they eat their own fruit may be brought.

"Since I've heard these foul plans and in mind these things kept,
"I've not eaten by day and at night I've not slept.

"Those wise in star lore said when asked, ''Tis undoubted
"'The king will be Bharat.' This cannot be flouted.

"The king's obligated to you; by that fact
"I will show you the way, if you're willing to act."

DOHA 22

Said the queen, "If you say so, I'll leave son and husband,
"And throw myself into a well!

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"Why should I not do what is good for me? You know
"My trouble; the remedy tell."

CHAUPAI 22

As victim for slaughter the queen was now netted;
The maid on her stony heart falsehood's knife whetted.

The queen did not see pain and trouble so near;
Altho' destined for slaughter, sheep graze without fear.

Sweet to hear were the maid's words, but bitter their end,
As with sweetest of honey one poison may blend.

Said she next, "My queen, do you remember or not?
"You once told me a story I have not forgot;

"You have left with the king two requests as a trust;¶
"Ask them now! Ease your heart today! Lady, you must!

"The throne ask for Bharat, for Rama the jungle;
"You'll thus snatch your rival's joy, if you don't bungle.

"First make the king take his oath in Rama's name;
"Then he can't break his word and your boons you can claim,

"Take my words to your heart, upon this hangs your fate;
"If night passes with nothing done, then 'tis too late."

DOHA 23

Manthara, evil-minded, her plan further told:
"In your rage shut yourself in your rooms;
"And then play your game carefully, don't yield at once
"To the pleas of the king when he comes."

CHAUPAI 23

To the queen now the hunchback was as her own soul;
Her dear maid's clever mind she began to extol;

"I have no friend to help me like you in this world;
"You support one who's drowning, to death being whirled;

¶ She once saved Dasrath's life when he was wounded in battle; as reward he promised two boons whenever she asked; she had reserved them till need arose.

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"If God my pray'rs answers tomorrow, I'll cherish
"You as my own eyes, dear; I'll not let you perish."

She praised her maid highly and then off she went
To her rooms as in rage, to fulfil her intent.

To seeds of distress was the maid rain in season;
The ground was the queen's perverse temper and reason;

By treachery watered, the seed there took root;
The two boons were two leaves, pain and trouble the fruit.

Her councillors, bitter thoughts—angry, perverted;
Her evil mind thus her own kingdom subverted.

While thro' the whole town happy plans were ensuing,
None knew of the sad evil things that were brewing.

DOHA 24

The folk carried on all their festive adorning,
Their gladness expressing aloud;
Some coming, some going, all busy; thus in
The king's hall there was always a crowd.

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

CHAUPAI 24

Some young friends of his boyhood, the news having heard,
Came to Rama to tell him the joy they all shared;

First he welcomed them gladly, their love knowing well,
And then asked that their welfare and doings they tell.

When with his permission at length they departed,
With one voice they praised him and said, gladsome-hearted:

"There's none like our Lord Raghubir on this earth,
"So devoted in virtue and love from his birth;

"To us whatever body our deeds may allot,
"In His kindness may God grant us this as our lot—

"Sita-Rama as masters on whom we depend,
"We their servants; may this be our lot without end."

While this one wish the hearts of the townsfolk inspired,
With her envy and spite was Kaikeyi's heart fired.

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Evil company always good plans will disrupt;
There's no soundness or depth in a mind that's corrupt.

DOHA 25

At eventide Dasrath, of these things not knowing,
Went gladly to Kaikeyi's room;
As tho', coming near to incarnate severity,
Love should a body assume.

CHAUPAI 25

"In her room and she's angry!" The king heard, dismayed;
He could scarcely move on, he was so much afraid;

That king by whom Indra himself dwells securely,
By whose favour all kings on earth can reign surely,

The rage of a woman smites him in this fashion!
How great is the power and pressure of passion!

He whom weapons deadliest never could harrow
Is fatally struck by the God-of-Love's arrow!

Much worried he came to his darling, and seeing
Her state, pain and anguish surged thro' his whole being;

She lay on the ground, jewels cast off in scorning,
In coarse old clothes clad like a woman in mourning;

Such ugly appearance her ugly mind suited;
By dread signs it seemed coming dread things were bruited.

The king coming near said in soft, gentle tones,
"What has made you so angry tonight, dearest one?

CHHAND 1

"My queen, let me know, What has angered you so."
As he touched her, she thrust him away,
With a furious glance, Like a snake that its chance
Is awaiting to strike when it may,

With a forked tongue that hangs, Over two poison fangs
(Her two fatal boons), vital spot seeking;
The king did not blame, Thought it just a love-game
Carried on by Fate, even while speaking:

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SORATHA 1

"Why angry, my queen, fair of face?
"Lovely-eyed one, with voice like a sweet-singing bird,
"You with movements the essence of grace,
"Tell me why." Thus again and again he implored.

CHAUPAI 26

"My dear, who has harmed you and made you so angry?
"For death, with but one head to spare, who is hungry?

"Pray tell me what beggar should be made a king;
"Or what ruler shall I from his throne and realm fling?

"If your foe is a god, even him I will kill!
"Man and woman, poor creatures are more helpless still!

"My mind you well know both in past and in present,
"Your face draws my eyes as the moon draws the pheasant;

"My own life, my sons, my relations, my treasure,
"My kingdom—all these, dear, are yours at your pleasure.

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"If you fear I don't mean this, then, nothing loth,
"With my promise, by Rama I'll give you my oath;

"Ask me anything, darling, but ask with a smile,
"Beautifying yourself with your jewels the while;

"You have made this glad day one for me dark and dire,
"Quickly go and put off this unseemly attire."

DOHA 26

At these words, the queen, evil-minded but trusting
That oath, rose up smiling and fair;
She put on her jewels and clothes, like a huntress
Who sets in the jungle her snare.

CHAUPAI 27

Happy now, the king thought his dear queen reconciled;
With love thrilling, he said in a voice soft and mild:

"My dear, what you wished for is near to fulfilling;
"Each house tells the rapture with which hearts are swelling;

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"To Rama tomorrow will bring coronation;
"Make ready to share, dear, this great jubilation."

Hard-hearted, she sprang up at once at this word,
As a mere touch splits open an over-ripe gourd;

She kept hid with a smile her deep anger and grief,
Like a woman whose husband was killed as a thief.

The king saw no scheming and no crafty suitor,
No queen trained in evil by most clever tutor.

In statesmanship Dasrath was skilled as can be;
But a woman's ways—they are a fathomless sea!

The queen to him replied, as false love she displayed,
And as, eyes and lips working, a false smile she made:

DOHA 27

"Again and again you've said, 'Ask, dear;' but never
"To giving it comes or receiving;
"You promised me two boons, I doubt if I'll get them;
"It's hard to keep on thus believing."

CHAUPAI 28

The king with a smile answered, "I know your tricks;
"You just love to get me by false rage in a fix;

"These boons are in trust; you've not asked for or sought them,
"And I, simple-minded, forgot all about them!

"Don't tax me with falsehood, or say I'm to blame;
"Ask for four boons, not two; they are yours just the same.

"'Tis a known rule in Raghu's line, one naught can shake—
"Life may go, but his word a man never must break;

"Just one falsehood all sins put together exceeds,
"As a mountain is far more than countless small seeds;

"But truth is the foundation sure of all merit
"And good—so do all saints and scriptures declare it.

"Moreover, by Rama my oath I have sworn,
"Chief in love and good of all in Raghu's line born."

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The queen smiled, and the king's word and bond having proved,
From her hawk-like deceit she the cover removed.

DOHA 28

The king's good intent was a forest, in which
Joys were found like a bright flock of birds;
Kaikeyi the huntress now sent out among them
The hawk of her terrible words.

CHAUPAI 29

"My beloved, to me my heart's longing accord,
"That as one boon my Bharat be made Avadh's lord;
"Hands uplifted, I ask of you this second boon,
"With the pray'r that my wish be fulfilled very soon:
"Decree Rama a hermit bereft of all goods,
"Make him live thus for full fourteen years in the woods."
These dread words made the king cold and faint with a daze,
Like a bird that is caught in the full moon's bright rays;
All trembling and numb, not a word could he utter;
When hawks swoop down, quails can do nothing but flutter;
This monarch so mighty—'twas awesome to see—
Lost all colour, as when lightning strikes a palm tree;
There he stood pale and still, with his hands to his head,
Grief embodied, and smitten; then moaning he said:
"Like a heavenly tree my heart's longing had bloomed;
"By an elephantess 'tis uprooted and doomed.
"By Kaikeyi Avadh has been desolated;
"To suff'ring immovable now it is fated.

DOHA 29

"With prospect so fine, what a sad sorry outcome;
"In woman no more can I trust;
"I am like an ascetic, the fruit of whose rigours
"Is due, but by folly is lost."

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

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CHAUPAI 30

Within him the king's heart began thus to burn,
But the vile queen, his plight seeing, answered with scorn:

"Pray tell me, is Bharat your son, sir, or not?
"What am I? Am I something you paid for and got?

"If what I have asked for is hurting you now,
"Why didn't you think before making your vow?

"You're a truthful one in truthful line! Let me know
"What your answer is; What do you say? Yes, or No?

"If now you won't give what you promised to give,
"Break your word, and in shame before men henceforth live.

"Did you think I would ask for a little parched grain,
"When you praised truth and made me your promise again?

"Their life and their all gave great heroes of yore,
"To be true to their vows and the word that they swore."

Kaikeyi with harshness the king thus defied;
Keen as salt were her words upon burnt flesh applied.

DOHA 30

King Dasrath, the pillar of truth and uprightness,
Took courage and opened his eyes;
"She has fatally wounded me," said he, still beating
His head and with deep anguished sighs.

CHAUPAI 31

Burning hot with her rage; there the king saw her stand,
As tho' holding her anger's drawn sword in her hand;

Its sharp edge was her harshness, its hilt her bad mind,
And the hunchback the stone such a weapon to grind.

He thought, as she stood there her deadly rage flaunting,
"'Tis either my truth or my life she is wanting."

She hardened her heart as again the king spoke,
Nor his voice nor his pray'r could her pleasure evoke:

"Why speak evil, my dear? Such a terrible thing
"On our truth, love and honour disaster will bring;

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"Both Bharat and Rama, I say in all fitness,
"Are dear as my eyes, and Lord Siva's my witness;

"I'll send them a message as soon as day breaks;
"They will both come at once; love delay never makes;

"When the plans are all made and a fit day is found,
"I'll give Bharat the throne, he as king shall be crowned.

DOHA 31

"Our Rama loves Bharat most dearly, and he
"After kingdom and pow'r does not hunger;
"I made plans according to all kingly rules,
"Thinking one is the elder, one younger.

CHAUPAI 32

"By Rama I swear, if there's yet any question,
"His mother has given no hint or suggestion;

"I did all myself, with you never consulted,
"That's why all my plans have in failure resulted;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"Be angry no more; in our joys take your part;
"Very soon I will make Bharat king, with good heart.

"But one thing, when 'tis thought of, my heart deeply pains;
"For your second boon, cause of misgiving, remains;

"Hot within me it burns since upon me it broke;
"Are you angry indeed, dear? Or is it a joke?

"Quit your anger and say, How has Rama offended?
"He's upright we all know; what's wrong can be mended.

"You too loved and praised him on ev'ry pretext;
"At the things I now hear I am sadly perplexed;

"Can one who, good-natured, wins over a foeman,
"His mother offend, or indeed any woman?

DOHA 32

"So thoughtfully ask now your boon, giving up
"This mock anger that has me appalled;
"That I yet with my own eyes may gladly see Bharat
"As ruler of Avadh installed.

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CHAUPAI 33

"A poor fish out of water perhaps might exist,
"Or a snake lose its gem and in life still persist;

"But truth and no lie from my heart I am giving;
"If Rama should leave me, I can't go on living;

"Be thoughtful, my wise one, and make these amends,
"For upon seeing Rama my whole life depends."

But her black heart began at these fair words to boil,
As a fire blazes out when one pours on it oil.

She replied, "Make a thousand plans, each one will fail;
"For with me your deceptions can never avail.

"Pray, grant my request, or be shamed by evasion;
"I don't like such wiles and deceitful persuasion;

"Oh yes, Rama's good; so are you, I can tell!
"And the mother of Rama—we all know her well!

"The fine things that Kausalya for me has designed,
"Now from me as her fruit those same things she shall find.

DOHA 33

"If Rama tomorrow at dawn does not go
"To the forest in real hermit guise,
"Then for me it will mean death and for you disgrace;
"Understand that, O king true and wise!"

CHAUPAI 34

This much saying, the queen filled with cruelty stood
Like a river of wrath that has swollen in flood;

In sin's mountain range birth and power receiving,
This river of rage was filled past all believing;

The boons were its banks, the queen's harshness the torrent,
The hunchback's words eddies that swelled in the current;

The king, a tree torn up by dashing and suction,
Was thus swept away to the sea of destruction.

He now realised all was true that had chanced;
That in woman's guise death on his head wildly danced;

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So he seated her near him and said, "Do not be
"For the Sun-Race an axe at the roots of a tree;

"You may ask for my head or whatever you will;
"Don't send Rama away; if you do, me 'twill kill;

"Let him stay here by whatever means you may please;
"If you banish him, life-long you'll be ill at ease."

DOHA 34

"But, seeing the sickness was now beyond cure,
He fell down, dashed his head on the ground,
And cried bitterly, "Rama, O Rama, my Rama!"
And sobbed—there was no other sound.

CHAUPAI 35

In distress the king's body was all numbed and cold,
Like the Heav'nly Tree felled by an elephant bold;

Not a sound could he utter, so dry was his throat;
He was helpless as fish in a waterless moat.

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Now Kaikeyi began bitter taunting again,
Into wounds pouring poison to add to his pain:

"If this was the thing that you always intended,
"Why keep saying 'Ask! Ask!' when thus it has ended?

"Can any one two things at once carry out,
"Make a smiling jest and show distress with a pout?

"You want the name Generous, acting as miser;
"To be called a brave, but have safety as wiser!

"Break faith, or else show manly strength and restraint,
"But do not be a wóman with softness and plaint;

"Land and house, wealth and body, one's children and wife,
"Are as straw if one holds the truth dearer than life."

DOHA 35

"But the king, sensing mystery, quietly answered,
"I see now you're not to be blamed;
"A demonic delusion has laid its hold on you,
"My dire fate it well might be named.

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CHAUPAI 36

"Of being made king Bharat never has dreamt;
"Fate has twisted your mind and thus brought us contempt;

"It is all the sad fruit of my own dreadful sins;
"Now since God is against me, disaster begins.

"But people in Avadh will once again flourish,
"And Rama as ruler this kingdom will nourish;

"His brothers will serve him in those coming years,
"And his glory and greatness will spread thro' all spheres.

"But your own evil deeds and my bitter remorse
"Will not ever be wiped out, but take their full course.

"Now do as you like, as by Fate you are bidden,
"But where I can't see you, there live and keep hidden;

"Nor ever, as long as I live, I beseech,
"Let me hear from your lips any sound, any speech;

"In the end you'll repent when your troubles begin,
"One who kills for a tiger a cow knows 'tis sin."

DOHA 36

Again and again saying, "Why thus destroy us?"
He fell down with anguish and yearning;
The clever false woman sat silent like one
Who keeps funeral fires fiercely burning.

CHAUPAI 37

"O Rama! O Rama!" again this was heard,
From the king, now distressed as a poor wingless bird;

In his heart he besought that the morn might not break
And that no one this ill news to Rama might take:

"Do not dawn, Lord of Raghu's line! Hold back, O Sun!
"For when Avadh sees you, then we all are undone."

Thus Kaikeyi's hard-heartedness and the king's love
To extreme were both carried by Brahma above.

As day broke with Dasrath lamenting and wailing,
Pipes, lutes, conches sounded the new morning hailing;

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As singers and bards their glad praises rehearsed,
By their words, as by arrows, the king's heart was pierced;

To him these rejoicings seemed wholly unfitting,
As gems to a wife on her husband's pyre sitting;

That night in all Avadh no person had slept,
For the vision of Rama their glad watch they kept.

DOHA 37

The servants and ministers came to the door
When they saw the sun rise and day breaking;
"Why is it," they said, "that on this special day
"Avadh's ruler seems not to be waking?"

CHAUPAI 38

"To rise at the last watch of night without change
"Is his rule; but today this thing seems very strange.

"Friend Sumant, go and waken him; go quickly hence
"And obtain his permission our work to commence."

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

So the minister went to the king in his room,
But was terror-struck seeing the dread signs of doom;

The room seemed to rush at him, wanting to eat him;
Here grief and calamity lived and would greet him.

He called; called again, but when no one replied,
He went in, found the king and Kaikeyi inside;

Said "Hail, O King!" bowed and sat down by his master,
But at the king's state was struck dumb with disaster;

His lord lay there colourless, numb and forlorn,
Like a lotus uprooted and carelessly torn.

Not a sound could the terrified minister make,
But Kaikeyi the baleful and ruthless then spake:

DOHA 38

"The king has not slept, but has lain thus all night,
"And the Lord only knows what's the cause!
"He will not tell the reason to me, but keeps muttering
" 'Rama, Rama,' without pause;

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CHAUPAI 39

"Go at once and call Rama, and do not be long,
"You can then for yourself ask him what has gone wrong."

Off Sumant went, well knowing the king would not mind,
But he saw that the queen had some evil designed;

He considered, as grief held him back on the way,
"The king's calling for Rama; what now would he say?"

First his mind he composed as he came to the gate,
There they all asked the reason on seeing his state;

Some assurance he gave them, as far as he could,
Then he quickly went off to Prince Rama's abode;

When the prince beheld Sumant, he paid him respect
Such as fathers from courteous sons can expect;

As Sumant gave the king's word, he watched Rama's face,
Then he took the prince with him on leaving the place.

The people who saw Rama go with the minister
Sensed something happening awful and sinister.

DOHA 39

When he got there Rama saw the king lying
In state of the utmost distress;
He was like an old elephant helpless and trembling,
When faced by a bold lioness.

CHAUPAI 40

His lips were dried up and he burned with a fever,
Just like a snake robbed of its jewel forever;

Kaikeyi stood by him, her anger still mounting,
Like Death in the body his last moments counting.

Here Rama, so kindly and tender by nature,
Saw for the first time a poor suffering creature;

His mind he composed as occasion required,
And of Kaikeyi then in a low voice enquired:

"Tell me, mother, the cause why my father's distressed;
"I will try to remove it and set him at rest."

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"The queen replied, "Listen, I'll tell you sincerely
"The cause, Rama; 'tis that the king loves you dearly;

"He promised me once that two boons would be granted,
"And now I have asked for the things I have wanted;

"As soon as he heard he was hurt and disturbed,
"And on your account chiefly his mind is perturbed.

DOHA 40

'On the one hand his love, on the other his promise,
"He's worried in straits betwixt two;
"But you can, if his word you obey, put an end
"To his trouble; it all rests with you."

CHAUPAI 41

She said these hard things with such bold calm and quiet,
The Spirit of Harshness was all upset by it;

Her tongue was the bow and her word was the arrow
With which she should pierce the king thro' to the marrow;

It seemed Heartless Cruelty here was embodied,
A soldier who archery practised and studied.

She seemed, as she sat there the whole story giving
To Rama, like Harshness incarnate and living.

Then he, source of joy, light of all the Sun-Race,
Gave his answer, the smile of his heart on his face;

Words he spoke like the gems of the Goddess of Speech,
Blameless words that the hardest of hard hearts might reach:

"Listen, mother, that son is a fortunate man
"Who obeys what his parents command when he can;

"Not so easily found in this world, you've observed,
"Is a son by whom father and mother are served.

DOHA 41

"If I live in the forest, 'twill be for my good;
"A great blessing will be this removal;
"I'll meet there great saints; I'll be bless'd by obeying
"My father, and have your approval,

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CHAUPAI 42

"And here Bharat will reign, my own heart's dearest friend;
"God today pours His blessings on me without end.

"If, having this chance, I don't go to the jungle,
"I'll be chief of all those who foolishly bungle,

"Who leave heaven's tree for a castor-oil plant,
"Or with nectar at hand poison ask for and want;

"Such men, had they this chance, would never forsake it;
"Just think, mother, could I then dare not to take it?

"There's only one thing that could give me concern,
"That the heart of the king with such anguish should burn;

"How comes it my father's upset by a trifle?
"That question disturbs me with doubts I can't stifle;

"In him always goodness and patience are blended;
"Against him in some way I must have offended;

"That's why he won't speak to me now as before.
"Come now, tell me the truth, by my faith I implore."

DOHA 42

Altho' what he said was straightforward and simple,
The queen in perverseness persisted;
She seemed like a leech that in calmest of waters
Must move with course crooked and twisted.

CHAUPAI 43

Kaikeyi, now happy with Rama consenting,
Pretended to love, in her plans unrelenting:

"By your name and Bharat's I faithfully swear,
"There is no other cause of which I am aware;

"You never give cause of offence, I know; rather
"You please all your brothers, your mother and father;

"'Tis true what you say, Rama; I too have noted
"To th' word of your parents you're wholly devoted.

"I beg you to plead with your father; beseech him
"To do naught in old age by which shame might reach him;

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"'Tis wrong that his good deeds should now be disdained,
"Deeds by which such a son as yourself was obtained."

Words so pleasing were like, in Kaikeyi's false mouth,
Sacred places in Magadh, the alien south;

But as Rama now welcomed them, worthy they seemed,
As all waters in Ganges' pure flow pure are deemed.

DOHA 43

The king regained consciousness, Rama recalling,
And painfully changed his position;
Sumant saw his chance, told him Rama was coming,
And quietly made his petition.

CHAUPAI 44

The king plucked up courage and opened his eyes
When he heard Rama's footsteps; he then tried to rise.

As the minister helped him and gave him a seat,
He saw Rama his son bowing low at his feet;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

To his bosom he clasped him, by waves of love tossed,
Like a serpent on finding the gem it had lost;

His look fixed on Rama's dear face, the tears poured
In a stream from the pained eyes of Avadh's great lord;

Not a word could he utter, but dumb in his grief
Clasped his son to his heart; sought but found no relief.

He prayed in his heart to God, tho' hope had vanished,
That Rama might not to the forest be banished;

He thought upon Siva, on him 'gan to call,
"Give thou heed to my plea, O thou great lord of all;

"Thou art generous, kindly and easily pleased,
"May this poor mortal's heart of its suffering be eased.

DOHA 44

"The hearts of all people by thee are inspired,
"May my Rama's heart be so directed,
"That my word ignoring, he yet may stay with us,
"Tho' duty and love be neglected,

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CHAUPAI 45

"My good name may perish in shame—it is well!
"I may go by death's pathway to heaven or hell!

"I will bear any pain, the severest and worst,
"If my eyes by his loss be not darkened and curst."

Not a word could he say, but these thoughts stirred his mind
Till it shook like a *peepul*-tree's leaves in the wind.

Rama, seeing his father o'ercome in this way
By his love, hoped Kaikeyi would have more to say.

Then he humbly and thoughtfully offered a word
As with that place and purpose and time would accord:

"My dear father," he said, "I am daring to speak;
"If I'm wrong, as a youth your forgiveness I seek;

"This is such a small thing; why be pained on that score?
"And why did you not tell me about it before?

"Of your queen I enquired when your state I perceived;
"Since she told the whole matter, I'm greatly relieved.

DOHA 45

"By the power of love, sir, put off all your sorrow,
"At this time when gladness is due;
"Be you happy again, father; give your commands."
As he said this he thrilled thro' and thro'.

CHAUPAI 46

"To great bliss is he born who on earth here below
"By his deeds to his father brings gladness, not woe;

"If a man his own father and mother regards
"More than self, in his hands are life's richest rewards;

"Most successful my birth when your word I fulfil;
"I will be ready soon, since I know 'tis your will;

"Having bid my own mother farewell, I'll come back,
"Take your blessing and make for the known forest track."

This much having said, for his rooms he departed;
The king could say nothing, so sad and down-hearted,

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The city soon heard of these terrible things,
As the whole body pains when a scorpion stings;

All were troubled at news of the evil designs,
As a forest-fire scorches the creepers and vines;

Ev'ry one, as he heard, began tearing his hair;
Hope and courage gave way to their bitter despair.

DOHA 46

All faces were pale and all eyes shedding tears,
As with sorrow all hearts were oppressed;
As tho' armies of Pathos in battle array
And with drums had the city possessed.

CHAUPAI 47

"A good plan," they all said, "God has sadly misused;"
And Kaikeyi wherever they met they abused:

"What has led this bad woman to such deeds of guilt?
"She has poured burning coals on a house newly built;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"She has torn out her eyes, yet of vision she thinks;
"She has thrown away honey while poison she drinks.

"She is stubborn, perverse, moved by deadliest ire,
"In the forest of Raghu's line like a fierce fire;

"Here she sits on a branch while the tree she cuts down;
"Over joyous scenes sackcloth of grief she has thrown.

"She held Rama dear to her in ev'ry season,
"But now she's his enemy; what is the reason?

"Of woman the poet once said, not unduly,
"'A fathomless mystery she.' He spoke truly;

"A man in a mirror his image might catch,
"But a woman's ways none can grasp, howe'er he watch.

DOHA 47

"There is nothing created that fire cannot burn.
"Not a thing the sea cannot contain;
"There is nothing death does not devour; nothing woman
"Won't do if the power she gain,

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CHAUPAI 48

"God said one thing before, now another is told;
"Once showed one thing, but now something else we behold."

One man said, "The king's made a most foolish mistake,
"Without thought he should never such promises make;

"He is suffering now his own folly's deserts,
"While that woman his wisdom and virtue subverts."

But some knew the king always acted uprightly,
And could not be blamed as one doing things lightly.

They tried to find comfort in times so appalling,
The story of King Harishchandra recalling.¶

Some troubled ones ways to keep silent contrived;
Others said, "Bharat surely in this has connived."

But some bit their tongues, stopped their ears and confounded
Replied, "Such a statement is wholly unfounded;

"By such thoughts your goodness will be undermined,
"No one dearer to Bharat than Rama you'll find.

DOHA 48

"Nectar might become poison, or maybe the moon
"Might rain down fiery sparks in great streams;
"But Prince Bharat could never do anything harmful
"To Rama, not even in dreams."

CHAUPAI 49

Some said, as they placed on Lord Brahma the onus,
"He's given us death after life he had shown us."

Throughout the whole city spread grief and confusion;
Their anguish burnt up all joy's festive profusion.

The wives of the priests, women aged and revered,
And Kaikeyi's close friends, all those to her endeared,

¶ A king of this line who, in loyalty to a Brahman, sold his kingdom, even his wife and son, and took service as an outcaste at a burning ghat, where yet greater agonies came; but at last loyalty was rewarded and he was fully restored.

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Praised her spirit of old, did their best to persuade;
Tho' their words pierced like arrows, yet no change was made:

"You have always said and to all is it well-known,
"'Rama's dearer than Bharat,'—such love have you shown;

"Come now, show us your true love and stop this pretence;
"To the forest why send him? What is his offence?

"With none of your sister queens have you been jealous,
"But rather in trust and devotion been zealous;

"What's wrong with Kausalya? Why change love so staunch,
"That on Avadh this dread thunderbolt you now launch?

DOHA 49

"Will Sita give up her beloved? Will Lakshman
"Stay home tho' the best be provided?
"Will Bharat consent to reign? And will the king
"Go on living, from Rama divided?

CHAUPAI 50

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"Think of this, and give up now this wild angry way;
"Don't become the dark stronghold of shame and dismay;

"If you wish it, let Bharat rule over the land,
"But no good will come if to the woods Rama's banned.

"For kingdom and throne Rama never has hankered,
"Nor for earthly things; to the truth he's firm anchored;

"If he must leave home, let him live with his master;
"With this as the second boon turn our disaster;

"A good son like Rama such fate does not merit.
"What will people say of yourself when they hear it?

"If you will not do what we ask in our sadness,
"Be sure you'll not gain but lose much by your madness;

"If what you have done was in joking and teasing,
"Then say so and be once more happy and pleasing;

"Come, get up now quickly and make an attempt
"To turn from us forever this grief and contempt!

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CHHAND 2

"Give yourself to some course, By which shame and remorse
"May disperse and we all be preserved;
"Let not Rama be sent, To the wood; change your bent,
"Let some worthier purpose be served.

"As the day without sun, And the night without moon,
"And the body without life and breath,
"So you must understand, Without Rama this land
"Will be doomed as with darkness and death."

SORATHA 2

Good counsel her women friends gave her,
In words that were kind and intended to help her;
She looked upon all with disfavour,
Unheeding; apt pupil of her perverse hunchback.

CHAUPAI 51

She said naught, but watched them with eyes hot and angry,
As on a poor fawn looks a tigress when hungry.

They saw she was hopeless, beyond their restoring;
So left, her sad fate and her folly deploring:

"She reigned, but by Fate she is doomed to despair;
"She has done things that no one else ever would dare."

The townsmen and women, with loud lamentation,
Reviled her vile doings in sad desperation;

All hot with high fever, they sighed and they sobbed,
"Can we go on with life, if of Rama we're robbed?"

At thought of his absence they fainted with anguish,
As, when the sea dries up, sea-creatures must languish.

While women and men told their grief to each other,
Prince Rama had gone to take leave of his mother;

Face shining, heart glad at the thing that had sent him,
And only one fear—that the king might prevent him.

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DOHA 50

Like a newly-caught elephant was this bright gem
Of the Sun-Race, by kingship yet chained;
At the thought that this chain might be loosed and he freed
For the woods, naught but gladness remained.

CHAUPAI 52

By thoughts of a life in the woods wholly captured,
He bowed to his mother, hands joined, heart enraptured.

She gave clothes and jewels as gifts while she blessed him,
And eager with love to her bosom she pressed him;

Eyes tear-filled and thrilled that as son she possessed him,
Again and again warmly kissed and caressed him,

She held him close to her, the dearest of guests,
While the milk of her love slowly dripped from her breasts.

Affection like hers defies verbal expression,
Like paupers' joys when they of wealth take possession.

She looked at his handsome face fondly and oft,
And at last said in tones that were tender and soft,

"Come, tell me, my son, for to know I am longing,
"The day and the moment when joys will come thronging,

"When virtue and goodness and hope will be crowned,
"The fulfilment of high birth and destiny found.

DOHA 51

"The day that the townspeople want to come quickly,
"And look for expectant and eager,
"As birds look and long for the time of cool rain
"When all moisture is dried up or meagre.

CHAUPAI 53

"Go quickly and bathe, son, and then what you will
"Come and eat; of my tastiest food take your fill;

"Then go to the king, let there be no delaying;
"There's been too much now—and I mean what I'm saying."

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Her words were to Rama as sweet, as he listened,
As tho' up in heav'n as love's flowers they glistened,
And each blossom nectar of bliss held and covered,
O'er which like a thirsty young bee his mind hovered.
But loyal to virtue and virtue's way knowing,
He quietly told her the way he was going:
"The woods as my realm to me father has given;
"I'll find there the things for which long I have striven;
"So give me permission and wish me all good,
"That all blessing and bliss I may find in the wood;
"Do not let your love make you afraid of the end;
"For my happiness, mother, on you must depend.

DOHA 52

"I shall stay fourteen years in the woods, and the word
"Of my father trustworthy I'll prove;
"Then I'll come back again and shall see you once more;
"From your mind then all sadness remove.

CHAUPAI 54

These few words of Prince Raghubar, tender and soft,
Pierced the heart of his mother, a most deadly shaft;
As she heard his calm voice, she went senseless with pain,
As *jawasa* plants¶ wither in showers of rain;
In a state beyond telling, her heart was dismayed,
As when tigers roar animals all are afraid.
As her eyes filled with tears, her frame shuddered and shrank,
Like a fish when the first monsoon water it drank.
Then looking up at him and fresh courage taking,
She said in a voice that with anguish was breaking,
"You're dear to the king as his life, and 'tis right;
"For in all your ways always he finds great delight;

¶ A plant that lives only in very dry soil.

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"To enthrone you, I know, he'd a fixed day and plan;
"For what fault has he now laid upon you this ban?
"Let me hear the whole story; tell all, son of mine!
"Who is acting as fire in the Royal-Sun-Line?"

DOHA 53

The son of Sumant who was there with him, looking
At Rama, the story retailed;
To which as she listened Kausalya was silent,
Her spirit and utterance failed.

CHAUPAI 55

She could not bid him go and could not hold him back,
For she saw ahead suffering lay in each track.
When about to write Moon, Fate had written Eclipse!
God against us the scales of good things always tips.
Both her truth and love held her, the grip of each taut;
She was just like a snake that a musk-rat has caught.¶

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

She thought, "If from love I here keep him before me,
"My virtue I forfeit and friends will abhor me;
"But if I say Go! then again much is lost."
Between doubt and distress she was helplessly tossed.
Then she wisely recalled how a wife's duty runs,
That both Rama and Bharat were truly her sons;
So as Rama's true mother, with spirit sincere,
She took courage and gave him her word, tho' severe:
"My dear son, you do well; I uphold you in truth;
"For one's father to heed is the duty of youth.

DOHA 54

"Tho' he promised the throne and now gives you the jungle,
"It gives me no pain, adds no burden;

¶ It is said that if a snake swallows a musk-rat it will die; but if it lets it go, the musk-rat will blind the snake.

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"But Bharat, the king and the people without you
"Will find bitter anguish their guerdon.

CHAUPAI 56

"My son, if you'd only your dear father's orders,
"You'd think mother more and not leave Avadh's borders;

"But when by them both forest life is permitted,
"To a place like a hundred Avadhs you're admitted.

"As parents the wood-god and goddess you'll meet;
"Birds and beasts of the forest will serve at your feet.

"Very rightly kings dwell in the woods in old age;
"But rememb'ring your youth, fears my heart will engage.

"Blest the forest will be, Avadh sadly bereft,
"When you, crown of the fam'ly of Raghu, have left.

"If my heart asks to go along with you, and sighs,
"Many questions and doubts in your heart will arise.

"Far dearer than all, son, to those who behold you;
"As life of their life, their soul's dearest, they hold you.

"But when you say, 'Forth to the woods I am faring,'
"My heart hears with sorrow and well-nigh despairing.

DOHA 55

"Tho' this is my mind, I will not bid you stay,
"And not let love unduly beset me;
"But in deep earnest this I will say as you go—
"Heed my words, son, and never forget me.

CHAUPAI 57

"Be you guarded, my son, while you do as you're bid,
"By ancestors and gods, as the eye by the lid.

"Banishment is a lake, friends and dear ones are fish;
"You are kindly and good, as your father would wish;

"Make plans in such ways, thoughtful heed to them giving,
"That when you return you may find them all living;

"Your friends, servants, townsmen all orphaned you'll leave,
"When you go to the forest and peace there achieve;

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"All fruits of their former good lives are discounted;
"By times dread and deadly now are they confronted."

She wept many bitter tears while she still clung
To his feet, by her fearful misfortune unstrung;

As within fires of anguish unspeakable burnt,
She poured out her laments at the things she now learnt.

He lifted her up in his arms; long did hold her,
As once more with warm loving words he consoled her.

DOHA 56

While these things were happ'ning, the news came to Sita;
In great agitation she rose,
Went at once to Kausalya and, bowing, sat by her
As one who another's pain knows.

CHAUPAI 58

Kausalya her blessing did quietly render,
Much worried, this wife seeing so young and tender;

While Sita, supreme in her wifely devotion
And beauty, eyes downcast, her thoughts set in motion:

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"To th' woods goes my dear one, naught now can deter;
"To go with him! Ah, what will this honour confer?

"Shall I go in the body, or only in soul?
"Who can say what will happen since God has control?"

She scratched with her toes on the ground, downward glancing;
Her anklets gave off jingling tones with their dancing,

As tho' they were praying aloud, loving-hearted,
"Oh, from Sita's feet may we never be parted."

Her eyes with great tears became misty and dim;
Seeing this, Rama's mother again spoke to him:

"Listen, son! Our dear Sita is tender and frail;
"Loved by parents-in-law and friends—love cannot fail.

DOHA 57

"Gem of kings is her father, great Janak; her father-
"In-law chief of all the Sun-Race;

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"And her husband the moon to their lily-like fam'ly
"Whenever he shows them his face.

CHAUPAI 59

"And I too have received a dear daughter-in-law,
"In her beauty and virtue and gifts without flaw;

"With love, as my eye's pupil, Sita is guarded,
"And always as dear as my life is regarded;

"As Heaven's own vine since she came I've cared for her,
"And always I'm pouring love's pure water o'er her;

"She blooms and bears fruit, but by God I am thwarted;
"Who knows what results will at length be reported?

"On rising from bed she was carried, or trod
"On soft carpets, but never set foot on bare sod;

"Always precious to me as myself has she been;
"Naught has done, not moved even a candle or screen.

" 'Tis this Sita who with you now wishes to go
"To the woods; so what say you, my son? Yes, or No?

"The young partridge that gladly the moon's rays will drink,
"From unbearable burning hot sun-rays must shrink.

DOHA 58

"The jungle is full of dread creatures and goblins,
"The fiercest man ever set eyes on;
"My son, can the Tree of Life live in a forest
"Of trees that exude deadly poison?

CHAUPAI 60

"Wild primitive women were made for the forest,
"Who know naught of comforts, not even the poorest,

"Mind-hardened, like insects that live among stones,
"Such a person no pain from a forest life owns.

"The wild forest is fit for an ascetic's wife,
"Who as such has abandoned all comforts of life.

"But Sita could never put up with such strictures;
"She'd run if she saw monkeys simply in pictures!

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"A mud pond is not a fit place for a swan
"That has simply a mountain-lake's lilies looked on.

"So now say what you wish, thinking on these things well,
"And I then your instructions to Sita will tell;

"While you, dear, being banished the forest must roam,
"It will comfort me greatly if Sita's at home."

Raghubir heard all this in his mother's dear tones
Full of gracious love such as a true mother owns.

DOHA 59

He tried by his answer to bring her some comfort
In words that were thoughtful and loving,
And then of the forest life told as he saw it,
The gain more than loss clearly proving.

CHAUPAI 61

Tho' courtesy, with mother there, might command
He refrain, yet he spoke by occasion's demand

To his Sita, "My lady, hear what I advise;
"Mark it well as what seems to me proper and wise;

"If you wish what is best both for me and for you,
"Heed my word, stay at home; it is what you should do;

"That you serve my dear mother is what I have willed,
"And with all that is good for you, dear, home is filled.

"The duty of woman, the greatest laid on her,
"Is this—Serve your parents-in-law with due honour.

"Whenever my mother recalls me with longing,
"When born of her love fears and worries come thronging,

"Then comfort her, graceful sweet-toned one, with tales
"Of old times, till once more in her mind peace prevails.

"My own fair one, I swear 'tis the truth that I speak;
"Asking you to stay here, mother's good do I seek.

DOHA 60

"Without trouble we win virtue's fruits if we heed
"What our teachers and scriptures require;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

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"But all history shows against obstinate ones
"All distresses and troubles conspire.

CHAUPAI 62

"So, my beautiful wise one, the word I'll obey
"Of my father, and quickly come home then to stay;

"For us days will soon pass, they can never stand still;
"Pay good heed to my word, dearest one, as my will.

"If, under love's pressure, resistance you offer;
"At last as the outcome you'll bitterly suffer;

"In th' woods, full of danger and dread in all forms,
"You'll meet terrible heat and cold, floods and great storms,

"Prickly grass, thorns and stones in the path ev'rywhere,
"While we travel bare-footed, no sandals to wear;

"Over terrible mountains that tower aloft
"Go the roads, and your feet are so tender and soft;

"Huge rocks and caves, deep daunting rivers and valleys;
"One's purpose at sight of them hardly one rallies;

"Bears, tigers, wolves, elephants roam all around
"With their cries, till one's courage all goes at the sound;

DOHA 61

"One must wear clothes of skin and bark, sleep on the ground;
"Nothing else is there, that is the reason;
"One's food roots and fruits; even that cannot always
"Be found, but each one in its season.

CHAUPAI 63

"Great man-eating demons in dreadful disguises
"One finds in great numbers, with other surprises;

"One drinks mountain water and health it soon harms;
"Oh, the forest is full of its untold alarms!

"Great serpents and birds, and most fearsome night prowlers
"That eat human beings, dread growlers and howlers;

"The brave tremble when of the jungle they think;
"Tender-eyed one, by nature from terrors you shrink;

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"You, swan-like in gait, in the woods must not wander;
"Who hears it will cast upon me shame and slander.

"The swan that in heaven's own lake lived and flourished
"In salty sea-water could never be nourished;

"The bird that lives always in green mango trees,
"In the wild jungle bush could find nothing to please.

"Stay at home, dear, and to those things careful thought give;
"Far too painful the forest for you there to live!

DOHA 62

"If one does not give heed to advice of a friend,
"Or a teacher, or master, well-meant,
"He will come to no good, but will meet with some harm,
"And at length will most surely repent."

CHAUPAI 64

Sita's eyes swam with tears, as each heart-moving word
Of her husband, her dearest, she lovingly heard;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

His words cool and soothing her heart set a-burning,
As cool autumn moons set the partridge a-yearning.

No word could she answer, but thought in her grieving,
"My dearest would leave me; Yes, soon will be leaving."

Earth's beautiful daughter, restraining her tears,
Gathered courage and sought to subdue thus her fears—

With hands folded she bowed low at Kausalya's feet,
Saying, "Mother, forgive if I'm bold, indiscreet;

"This good counsel I've heard from the lord of my life,
"Who has thought first of all of my good as his wife;

"But I know my own mind and I think otherwise;
"Being torn from one's love—in that deepest pain lies."

She prostrated herself at the feet of her lord,
Saying to him, as love throbbed in every word:

DOHA 63

"Dearest lord of my life, O thou treas'ry of mercy,
"O wisdom's and joy's deepest well,

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"O bright moon to the lotus of Raghu's line, heaven
"Without you would be simply hell.

CHAUPAI 65

"One's mother and father, one's sisters and brothers,
"One's own loving fam'ly, well-wishers and others,

"One's parents-in-law, teachers, helpers and friends,
"Children too—all help onward life's true joys and ends.

"But if, husband absent, a lonely wife's longing,
"More fierce than hot sun rays are bonds round her thronging;

"The body, wealth, home, city, kingdom—all these,
"If her husband's away, give her pain, never please;

"Each gem is a weight, a disease ev'ry pleasure,
"The earth like hell's torments, beyond mind or measure.

"My dear one, if from you on earth I am parted,
"All joy from that moment from me has departed.

"Just like lifeless bodies and waterless streams,
"When her husband's away, to a woman life seems.

"My own lord, only then can I know true delights
"When I see your dear face, moon of autumn's cool nights.

DOHA 64

"Birds and beasts like relations, the forest a city,
"Bark garments like silk soft and pure,
"And grass huts like to heaven for comfort will be,
"When with you happiness is secure.

CHAUPAI 66

"Wood gods and goddesses in truest affection,
"Just like our own parents, will give me protection;

"When lying on grass or on leaves as my bed,
"'Twill be like the soft couch for the God of Love spread;

"Roots and fruits will be heavenly; mountains and falls
"Will be like Avadh's many dear fountains and halls.

"Ev'ry moment, when watching your lotus-like feet,
"I'll be happy as birds when the morning they greet.

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"The fears, dangers, troubles and pains you've recounted
"As found in the woods, these can all be discounted;

"Together they're nothing at all if compared
"With my suff'ring if with you life cannot be shared.

"Consider this, Crown of my Life now and ever!
"Oh, let me go with you and part from you never!

"What need to beseech you, my lord, in this fashion?
"You know all my heart and are full of compassion.

DOHA 65

"O friend of the humble, of true joys the giver,
"Of all love and virtue the source,
"If you think I can live without you; in Avadh
"Make me stay thro' your exile's long course!

CHAUPAI 67

"While watching your feet I shall never be weary,
"And walking with you, roads will never be dreary;

"I'll serve my beloved, I'll lighten his load
"And protect him from all the distress of the road;

"His dear feet I will wash as we sit in the shade;
"For cool comfort I'll fan him and give him my aid;

"Your dear body seeing, all wearied and sweating,
"No thought shall I have for pain, no time for fretting;

"On th' ground grass and leaves as our couch I will strew,
"Your feet massage each night, give you rest the night thro';

"And if thus all the time your dear form can be watched,
"By the heat and fierce winds I shall never be touched.

"My dear lord, when I'm with you, to gaze none would dare,
"But as on lion's mate would a jackal or hare!

"While you roam the woods can I be nice and dainty?
"While you are deprived, can I want ease and plenty?

DOHA 66

"If finally, at the mere word of this dread
"Separation my heart does not burst,

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"My dear husband, why—then let it come! This poor life
"Will be then well-prepared for the worst!"

CHAUPAI 68

As she finished these words, Sita broke into tears;
"Separation" once heard brought unbearable fears.

When her grief Rama saw, he said under his breath,
"If I leave her and go, it will mean for her death."

He, Lord of the Sun Race, the Kindly, assenting,
Said, "Come to the woods, dear, and cease your lamenting;

"For sadness and tears this is not the occasion;
"Go, make for the journey at once preparation."

His wife with these loving words having relieved,
At his mother's feet bowed, he her blessing received;

She said, "Return soon, to your people thus giving
"New hope; think of me—stony heart if I'm living!

"It may be that God will withdraw His decree,
"And my eyes once again my two dear ones will see.

"O my son, may the glad day and moment come soon
"When again your dear face I'll see, bright as the moon;

DOHA 67

"When 'My darling: My child: Raghubar: Raghupati:
" 'My son' I shall call you again;
"When again I shall take you in loving embrace
"And rejoice at the sight—gone all pain!"

CHAUPAI 69

Seeing love so completely his mother o'erwhelm,
In her grief her voice failing and gone all her calm,

To relieve her distress Rama did what he could;
One could not fitly tell the love shown if one would!

At the queen's feet then Janki fell down with this cry,
"Among women least fortunate, mother, am I;

"Just when I could serve you, by God I am banished,
"And hopes of my aims being fruitful have vanished.

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"Stop grieving, but love me, I pray, just the same;
"It is hard cruel Fate and not I that's to blame."

At these words was Kausalya yet more deeply grieved;
Her condition could hardly be told or believed;

Again and again to her bosom she pressed her,
And summoning courage she said as she blessed her,

"Good fortune to you may kind Heaven be showing,
"As long as the Ganges and Yam'na are flowing!"

DOHA 68

Kausalya to Sita gave kindly instruction
And counsel, along with her blessing;
Then Sita bowed low at the feet of the queen,
And departed, her true love confessing.

CHAUPAI 70

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Poor Lakshman meanwhile had got word of the plan,
And in utter distress off to Rama he ran;

With his body all trembling and eyes full of tears,
On his feet he laid hold, moved by love and dread fears;

Then he stood up and speechless at Rama he gazed,
Like a fish out of water, distressful and dazed;

In his heart he thought, "Now, what will happen, O God?
"All our joys and good deeds are here laid in the sod;

"Oh, what now will my dear brother tell me to do?
"Will he make me stay here, or take me with him too?"

As he stood there hands clasped, Rama clearly beheld
That but lightly by home ties and such was he held;

Therefore he, Rama, home of all truth and all faith,
Source of blessing to all those who share life and breath,

Said, "Brother, by love do not be thus afflicted,
"Rejoice, for a good end we know is predicted.

DOHA 69

"Whoever the teaching of father and mother
"And teacher well heeds and observes,

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"He is born to advantage and good, otherwise
"On this earth no good purpose he serves.

CHAUPAI 71

"Take this and my counsel to heart, my dear brother;
"Stay here and serve faithfully father and mother.

"Shatrughna and Bharat just now are not here;
"The aged king in my absence will suffer, I fear;

"If I take you also with me, when we have left,
"Then of leaders will Avadh be wholly bereft;

"On parents and family, subjects and masters,
"We'll bring bitter suff'ring and greater disasters.

"So you must stay here and the kingdom maintain;
"Otherwise severe blame we shall surely sustain.

"That ruler deservedly hell will inherit,
"Whose people lose all joyous fruits of their merit.

"Consider things carefully, brother, and stay."
Poor Prince Lakshman at this was o'ercome with dismay;

By these calm words of Rama all vigour he lost,
Like a lily that fades at the first touch of frost.

DOHA 70

Distressed, he clung to him, but little could say,
Overcome by love eager and fervent;
"But how shall I live, if you leave me, since you
"Are my master and I am your servant;

CHAUPAI 72

"The counsel you give, sir, is fitting and fine;
"But I'm timid, it's hard for these powers of mine.

"Valiant heroes and champions, in faith firm and bold,
"The great scriptural truths and ideals can uphold.

"Brought up by your love, I am still but a suckling;
"Can mountains be lifted and borne by a duckling?

"I know neither teacher, nor mother, nor father
"But you; Oh, believe it! My heart owns you rather.

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"What ties the world holds for us, sacred and fond,
"All affection and faith, ev'ry scriptural bond,
"For me, my dear master, in you they all center,
"Thou friend of all, knowing all, error's preventer.
"To those give your teachings in duty and morals,
"Who wish to win glory and honour's high laurels;
"But I am devoted in thought, deed and word,
"To you only; one such can you leave, gracious Lord?"

DOHA 71

These words of his brother, so modest and tender,
The Gracious One heard and described
His deep loving despondency; then to console him
Embraced him and thus he replied:

CHAUPAI 73

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"Go you quickly, my brother, your mother's leave take,
"Then return and at once for the forest we'll make."
To hear this from his brother delighted the boy;
At the gift he had gained sorrow gave place to joy.
He went to his mother with heart all enraptured,
As glad as a blind man who sight has re-captured;
He bowed to her courte'usly, gave her a smile;
But of Rama and Sita he thought all the while.
When she saw his distraction, she asked him the cause,
And he told her the story in full, without pause.
At these terrible words she was dumb with despair,
Like a fawn seeing fire spreading all round its lair.
Lakshman thought, "All awry today ev'rything goes;
"What I wish for so much mother's love will oppose."
He asked leave to go, tho' with much hesitation,
Then waited and wondered in great agitation.

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DOHA 72

Sumitra knew well the king's love and the goodness
Of Rama and Sita—'twas seen;
She beat her breast, saying, "The evil was done
"By Kaikeyi, my own sister queen."

CHAUPAI 74

She rallied her heart, the bad times realising,
And answered with kindness, her sorrow disguising,

"Vaidehi's your mother, my son, as you know;
"To you, Rama, a father's love always will show;

"For you that place is Avadh where'er Rama lives,
"As 'tis daytime wherever the sun its light gives.

"If our Sita and Rama must go to the wood,
"Then for you to stay on here is not wise or good.

"One's own parents and teachers, the gods, and one's friends
"One must serve as oneself; 'tis the noblest of ends;

"But as life of all souls, Rama's far dearer still,
"The best friend of all creatures thro' good and thro' ill.

"The ones who to Rama in love are the nearest,
"Are to us most worthy, most honoured and dearest.

"To th' woods with them go, with this always in mind,
"And receive the best gift one in this life can find."

DOHA 73

"The height of good fortune, my son, I assure you,
"Have both of us fully achieved,
"If your heart, without feigning or falsehood, its place
"At the Lord Rama's feet has received.

CHAUPAI 75

"That mother's a mother indeed, be it noted,
"Whose son is to Raghubir wholly devoted;

"But if he is not, to be childless were better;
"Such sons are no good, they're a curse and a fetter.

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"'Tis no other cause my son, but for the sake
"Of your good that the jungle road Rama should take;

"As fruit of good deeds this all else is above,
"That dear Rama and Sita should hold our heart's love;

"To hot passion, wrath, jealousy, pride, false esteem
"Give no place, and of yielding to such never dream;

"Put off ev'ry fanciful feeling and notion,
"And give to their service your fullest devotion.

"You'll find pleasant ease in each wood path and grove,
"When with Sita and Rama as parents you rove.

"Now I give you in parting this counsel—no less—
"Do your best in the woods to keep from them distress.

CHHAND 3

"This my counsel for good, While you wander the wood,
"Give them always a joyous uplift,
"That their parents and friends, And home-life's happy trends,
"They may not recall, nor feel the rift."

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Then with these last commands, And her counsel, her hands
She uplifted and gave him this blessing:
"May both body and mind, Purest joy ever find,
"Love for Rama and Sita expressing."

SORATHA 3

At his mother's feet low Lakshman bowed,
And then hastily ran off, his heart beating wildly;
The gladness he eagerly showed
Of a deer that is freed from a perilous snare.

CHAUPAI 76

Off to Sita and Rama he went with a bound,
And was happy once more when those dear ones he found;

There he paid them due rev'rence, with loving intent;
To the king's palace then all together they went.

To each other the citizens said, "Fate is hard!
"God had made a fine plan, but, alas! it is marred."

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Drooping bodies, hurt minds, doleful faces—they sobbed
In distress, just like bees when their honey is robbed;
Their hands wringing, heads beating, with quivering lips,
They lamented like birds when their wings someone clips.
Then to the king's palace the people came thronging,
All drawn by unspeakable grief and vain longing.
The minister led the poor king to his seat,
Rama spoke loving words as he bowed at his feet;
As he looked at his two sons and Sita, his grief
And despair seemed beyond all control or relief.

DOHA 74

Again and again, in his bitter despair,
Did he gaze longing looks on each turning,
And clasped to his bosom each one, in the grip
Of his agonised love and deep yearning.

CHAUPAI 77

Not a word could he say as his eyes on them dwelt;
But within burning fires of hot anguish he felt;
Then again bowing low, with love filling his heart,
Rama rose and asked humbly for leave to depart:
"Give to each your commands, sir, as each one you bless;
"Pray, in time of such joy do not yield to distress;
"If by love to another too deeply attached,
"Fame and honour are lost, shame and trouble are hatched."
The king rose as Rama his wishes repeated,
And taking his hand, bade him also be seated;
"My son," he said, "listen! 'Tis said by the sages
"That Rama is lord of all creatures and ages;
"That God, who the hearts and the ways of all knows,
"As their deeds may be, good fruit or evil bestows;
"Soundest principle too says what scripture asserts,
"That as each one has done so shall be his deserts.

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DOHA 75

"But that one should offend and another should suffer,
"Was such ever seen in all hist'ry?
"God's ways are beyond understanding and changeful,
"None ever can fathom their myst'ry."

CHAUPAI 78

The king tried his best to keep Rama from leaving,
Tried plan after plan, with no lies or deceiving;

But faithfulness, wisdom and courage prevailed,
When he saw that to keep him there nothing availed.

Then young Sita he took in a loving embrace,
And the issues he helped her more clearly to trace;

He told her of things in the woods she would suffer,
And joys that friends here or her father could offer.

But following Rama to Sita seemed gainful;
With him woods would charm, home without him be painful.

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Companions tried also their hardest to turn her,
Each one of the forest's discomforts did warn her;

The minister's wife and her teachers as well
Gently, lovingly told her what wisdom could tell:

"You have not by the king to the woods been exiled,
"Do as teachers and parents request you, dear child."

DOHA 76

But Sita, altho' they were well-meant and kindly,
Unhappy was made by their words,
As the rays of the moon in the cool autumn trouble,
If looked on, the shade-loving birds.

CHAUPAI 79

She made no reply; shyness kept her from speaking,
Kaikeyi rose hastily, her chance then seeking;

She brought in a hermit's poor garments and dish,
Put them down and said softly, thus showing her wish,

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"You are dearer than life to the king, Raghubir;
"Love and goodness hold back his permission, I fear!

"Tho' all virtue and honour and heaven he lose,
"His consent for your life in the woods he'll refuse;

"Think of this then, and do that which seems to you right."
At her words, Rama's face shone with hope's happy light.

But they pierced like a shaft the king's heart in his need,
"Alas! When from this life," he said, "shall I be freed?"

While the people were grieving, he fell in a faint;
"No one knows what to do," was their worrying plaint.

But then Rama assumed hermit's clothing and load,
And with bows to his parents set out on his road.

DOHA 77

Lord Rama, now dressed and prepared for the forest,
Set out with his brother and wife;
Paid the priests and his master due rev'rence, but left them
Distraught, as tho' robbed of their life.

CHAUPAI 80

He went to the house of Vashishth and there waited;
The people in anguish watched, now separated;

To give them some comfort he lovingly tried;
All the priests and the Brahmans he called to his side,

Asked his teacher to give them at once a year's food,
And affection with many an off'ring he wooed;

With his kindness and gifts satisfied all the poor;
And his friends with his love, sincere now as before;

Calling also his men and his maid servants there,
To his teacher entrusted them all with this prayer,

"My master, I pray you them lovingly cherish,
"And as his own parents each one of them nourish."

Again and again, with hands clasped to his breast,
In his kindliest tones he his people addressed:

"He in all ways will be my true helper and friend,
"By whom comfort and peace the king finds to the end.

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DOHA 78

"O my people of Avadh, so thoughtful and good,
"Live and act that this end may be gained,
"That while we are away our dear mothers may never
"Be needlessly troubled or pained."

CHAUPAI 81

His thoughts for his people in this way avowing,
And low at the feet of his lov'd master bowing,

From gods and goddesses, with rev'rence devout,
Seeking blessing, the three on their journey set out.

There rose, as they went off, unbearable wailing
From all the poor people, courageousness failing.

In Avadh grief, in Lanka many a sign
Of ill due; while in heav'n joy and sorrow combine.

In the meantime the king had awaked from his swoon,
And was able to speak to Sumant very soon:

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

"Rama's left for the woods, but my life does not leave;
"In this body what joy can it hope to receive?

"Can there be greater tortures than these yet to force
"My poor soul to break free from this bodily course?"

He said to Sumant, trying courage to rally,
"Go after them, friend! Take a chariot! Don't dally!

DOHA 79

"The daughter of Janak is delicate, and the
"Two princely youths hardihood lack;
"Seat them all in the chariot, show them the forest,
"And after a few days come back.

CHAUPAI 82

"The two lads may stay there in the courage of youth,
"For we know Rama's firm and devoted to truth;

"If 'tis so, humbly ask of them this much at least,
"That to come home with you the princess be released;

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"Upon seeing the woods Sita may be afraid,
"At this time let this counsel before her be laid:

"'To their daughter your parents-in-law send this news;
"'In the woods terrors lurk; come back home! Don't refuse!

"'Sometimes here, sometimes in your old home, you will find,
"'A glad welcome; stay just where your heart is inclined.'

"Do your best, friend, to bring her back home to our court;
"If she comes, then my soul will have still some support;

"If she doesn't, then life for me soon will be closed;
"There's no purpose in living, when God is opposed."

With one last cry he fainted and fell to the floor,
"Let me see Rama, Lakshman and Sita once more."

DOHA 80

The minister bowed to the king's command, ordered
A chariot at once, and contrived,
To reach the two brothers and Sita now outside
The city—and soon there arrived.

CHAUPAI 83

Sumant to them there the king's message repeated
And asked Rama, "Please in the chariot be seated."

They all took their places and as they departed
Gave Avadh salute in farewell and warm-hearted.

The citizens, seeing them go, tried to follow;
Their lives seeming now bereaved, orphaned and hollow;

The Lord tried to comfort them, bade them go back,
They obeyed, but love brought them again in his track.

Avadh seemed now a place of dread terror and doom,
As tho' over them settled Dark Death's midnight gloom;

Their own homes seemed like graves, fellow citizens ghosts,
Their close friends and their children the Death-angel's hosts;

The creepers and trees in the gardens all withered;
Their eyes from the streams and lakes no pleasure gathered;

Each seemed to the others a fearful wild beast;
As they looked at each other, their terror increased.

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DOHA 81

All the horses and elephants, all the tame deer,
All the citizens' cattle and herds,
Cuckoos, peacocks and swans, parrots, herons and cranes,
Pheasants, starlings and all other birds—

CHAUPAI 84

At Prince Rama's departure they stood there aghast,
All as lifeless as statues, to one spot held fast;

The whole city was like a wood, pathless and dense,
And the people like birds and beasts without defence;

God had sent one among them of wild jungle ways,
Queen Kaikeyi, who set their whole world in a blaze.

All the people, distracted, ran here and ran there,
For the fierce fire of Rama's loss no one could bear;

Ev'ry one of them thought in the depth of his heart,
Joy will with Rama, Lakshman and Sita depart;

KAIKEYI'S ENMITY AND RAMA'S BANISHMENT

Where our Rama is, there ev'ry good can be had;
But without him the best Avadh holds will be bad.

Leaving heavenly comforts and homes, off they went
From conviction, to go where'er Rama was bent.

That person is never enslaved by mere pleasure,
For whom Rama's lotus-feet hold highest treasure.

DOHA 82

Homes leaving, they followed, from youngest to old,
Where their Rama was wending his way;
Reached the banks of the Tamasa river with him
On the night of the travellers' first day.

CHAUPAI 85

At the love of his people, so wondrously proved
By their suff'ring, the kind heart of Rama was moved.

The dear Lord Raghunath in compassion is such
That the pain of another his heart will soon touch.

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He lovingly spoke to them words kind and tender,
Again and again trying comfort to render,
Their duty recalled, their return strongly urged,
But they would not; love's waves afresh over them surged.
Tho' he tried, loving hearts he could not overcome,
But himself to uncertainty had to succumb.
The poor people, now weary from grief, fell asleep;
The delusion of God made unconsciousness deep.
When the midnight hour came Rama—fully awake—
Said to Sumant, "Our way we must now onward make;
"Drive us this way and that, and the track thus confuse,
"Hide the way we have gone; that's the plan we must use."

DOHA 83

Rama, Lakshman and Sita first bowed to Lord Siva,
Then soon in the chariot were seated;
Sumant drove them hither and thither, that efforts
To find them might all be defeated.

CHAUPAI 86

In the morn when the people found as they awoke
That their Rama was gone, a great cry from them broke;
They called out "Rama! Rama," this way and that rushed,
But could find no wheel tracks, for they all had been crushed.
Then they yielded to panic and wildest commotion,
Like men in a ship sinking fast in mid-ocean;
They tried to explain to each other in brief,
"Rama left us to find in his trouble relief."
Fish they envied that die when from water they're drawn;
"Life is curst," they said, "since from us Rama is gone!
"Will not God to us give, as we ask of him, death,
"Since he's taken one dearer far than life and breath?"
Thus lamenting and wailing, they homeward returned;
Fever-like Avadh burned as for Rama they yearned,

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One cannot tell fully their anguished arrival;
Hope of his return alone promised survival.

DOHA 84

The townsmen and women took on austere vows,
Sight of Rama once more to secure;
They were like the poor cuckoo and lotus, that life
Without sunlight can never endure.

CHAUPAI 87

With Sumant, the two brothers and Sita the fair,
Came at length to a village by name Shringaber;

Here Rama, the fair Ganges river beholding,
Got out and bowed rev'rently, hands humbly folding;

His three fellow trav'llers paid rev'rent salute;
With them Rama found gladness, this bright vision's fruit;

For the Ganges brings blessing wherever she flows;
She destroys ev'ry sorrow and pleasure bestows.

As Rama stood watching the river's waves dancing,
He told many things of her bright and entrancing;

To th' minister, Lakshman and Sita, in stories
He spoke of the heav'nly stream's grandeur and glories.

They bathed in it, drank of it; thus all fatigue
Of the journey took wings after many a league.

Not in truth, but as man speaks, of him do we say
"He was tired," thoughts of whom will all burdens allay.

DOHA 85

Rama—truth, wisdom, bliss; of the Sun-Race the banner,
All pure, faith of all men attracting,
To bear as a bridge o'er life's boisterous billows,
The part of a man here was acting.

CHAUPAI 88

Of their coming when Guha, the head boatman, heard,
To his neighbours and friends he at once gave the word;

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From their gardens they took roots and fruits and went out,
Happy such guests to greet, with glad shout upon shout.

Guha gave his salute and his offering made;
Warm devotion, with eyes on the Lord, he displayed.

Rama's heart too was captured by love so sincere;
Of his welfare he asked, as he seated him near.

Guha answered, "My lord, seeing you all is well;
"I am most highly-favoured, as all men may tell;

"All my land and my house, my possessions and stores,
"I myself and my fam'ly, tho' base—all are yours;

"To my village and home bring your pure, sacred feet;
"Let me serve you there; men will of praise think me meet."

Rama said, "Worthy friend, what you say is quite true;
"But the king's word forbids, and his will I must do.

DOHA 86

"Now for full fourteen years I must live in the forest,
"A hermit in vows, food and dress;
"For me village and house are forbidden." When Guha
Heard this, he showed deepest distress.

CHAUPAI 89

Villagers, seeing their fine genteel beauty,
Spoke up as a loving and protesting duty:

"Friend, what kind of parents are these who have sent
"Such young folks to the woods, and what was their intent?"

Said one, "The king did well to make this provision;
"Our eyes by good fortune have this happy vision."

Their headman a place of rest thoughtfully planned,
As a fine *shisham* tree he recalled close at hand;

He took Raghunath to it and showed him the plot,
Who on seeing it said, "'Tis a most pleasant spot."

The villagers left, their respects having given,
And Rama went off for devotions of even.

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Then lovingly Guha made for them a bed,
Weaving mats of soft leaves and grass carefully spread;
Next he filled large leaf bowls, each one cleanly and neat,
With the best roots and fruits, all refreshing and sweet.

DOHA 87

Of the food offered to them, the gem of the line
Of Raghu and his companions ate;
Then he lay down to rest, Sita by him, and at his feet
Lakshman, the hour being late.

CHAUPAI 90

When he saw Rama sleeping, then Lakshman arose
And requested Sumant to take also repose.
A little way off he, as sentinel steady,
Sat watching, his arrow and bow fixed and ready.
In places exposed Guha placed trusty guards,
To give warning of danger and watch o'er his wards;

CONVERSATION OF LAKSHMAN AND GUHA

He himself sat by Lakshman and faithful watch kept,
Quiver hung, bow and shaft in hand, while Rama slept.
There the boatman-chief, watching the Lord as he lay,
Was o'ercome in his love by distress and dismay;
From his eyes, with his body thrilled, tears gently flowed;
As he talked there with Lakshman, his words his love showed:
"In the king's palace pleasures and beauties are shared;
"None in Indra's court found could with them be compared;
"Its pavilions with precious stones brightly inlaid,
"As tho' by the Love-god's skilful hands it were made.

DOHA 88

"Clean and bright, and with all kinds of comforts replete,
"Wholly charming and safe are its bowers;
"Ev'rywhere softest couches and bright jewelled lamps,
"And the sweet scent of beautiful flowers.

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CHAUPAI 91

"There with covers all made of the finest of silk,
"On white cushions as soft as the foam of pure milk,

"Sita-Rama in quiet and sleep passed the night;
"Envy gripped the Love-god and his queen at the sight.

"Now tired, upon mats without covers they're sleeping;
"I can't bear the sight as our watch we are keeping.

"He who by his parents and friends and relations,
"By neighbours and handmaids and men of all stations,

"As carefully as their own life blood was guarded—
"That Rama with earth as his bed is rewarded;

"Vaidehi, to Rama her husband so loyal,
"Whose father-in-law is lord Indra's friend royal,

"Who from mighty Janak world-famed had her birth,
"By perverseness of God she too sleeps on the earth.

"For the jungle unfitted do both of them seem;
"Men say often and truly that Fate is supreme.

DOHA 89

"King Kekaya's daughter¶ in ignorant malice,
"By causing such suff'ring, has wronged
"And done greatest injustice to Rama and Sita,
"To whom at this time joy belonged.

CHAUPAI 92

"Wretched woman, she robs the whole world of its joys;
"Like an axe she the tree of the Sun-Race destroys."

Greatest sorrow and worry the poor boatman found,
Seeing Sita and Rama asleep on the ground.

To him Lakshman replied in a low gentle voice,
Full of warm love and knowledge, unselfish and choice:

"No man can give sorrow or joy to another;
"It's always the fruit of one's own actions, brother;

¶ Kaikeyi,

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"Uniting, dividing, foul pleasures or fair,
"Evil, good, or indiff'rence—'tis delusion's snare;
"Of life and of death the world's course is the reason,
"Of all gain and loss, of each fruit in its season;
"One's city and fam'ly, land, riches and home,
"Even life and death too, in the world's course must come;
"But listen and note and take heed in your soul—
"All these things are unreal, bring us not to our goal.

DOHA 90

"Just as in their dreaming kings may become beggars,
"And beggars may well become gods,
"But on waking find no gain or loss, so to us
"Is this delusive life with its odds.

CHAUPAI 93

CONVERSATION OF LAKSHMAN AND GUHA

"So consider this well and with anger have done;
"For these troubles put uselessly blame upon none;
"Here we all are asleep and we see many dreams,
"But because of illusion real ev'ry one seems;
"In this night-like world those devoted ones waken
"Who, seeking the real, have all false things forsaken.
"Know this—Only then the soul wakens to morn,
"When it turns from all sensual pleasures with scorn;
"When the soul wakens, falsehood and error must flee;
"Then to Rama's blest feet one devoted can be;
"In thought, word and deed to his feet when devoted,
"The chief good of life is then ours, be it noted;
"For Rama is Brahma, of all good the essence,
"Eternal, unseen, filling all with His presence,
"Unequalled, above all division and change;
"Scriptures show him to be far beyond our mind's range.

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DOHA 91

"For the sake of the faithful, mankind, Brahmans, cows
"And gods also, he's come in his kindness;
"He's taken man's form and assumed human ways;
"Hearing this, men are freed from their blindness.

CHAUPAI 94

"Understand this, friend; leave behind dreams and deceit;
"Be devoted to Sita's and Raghubir's feet."

As he talked of the virtues of Rama, day broke,
And the giver of all the world's blessings awoke;

Having all kinds of cleansing and bathing observed,
He requested with banyan tree milk to be served;

Lakshman's hair and his own then in hermit's knot bound;
At this sight, Sumant fresh cause for tearfulness found;

His heart hot within him, his doleful face drooping,
He said, hands clasped humbly, before them low stooping:

"My lord, as you left I was asked by the king—
"Go with them in a chariot and thus Rama bring

"To the wood, let them see it and when they have bathed
"In the Ganges, then home again bring them unscathed;

"Rama, Lakshman and Sita—return them all here,
"And dispel ev'ry doubt, ev'ry scruple and fear.

DOHA 92

"Thus commanded the king, my lord; but I am now
"In your hands and must do as you bid."
As he made his request, he wept just like a child
And his face at the Lord's feet he hid.

CHAUPAI 95

"Have pity upon us and so act, my master,
"That Avadh may be saved from orphaned disaster."

Then Rama said, as he the minister raised,
"Duty's path you know well, friend, and oft have appraised;

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"Harishchandra, Dadhichi and Sivi—great kings—
"By their faithfulness met countless troublesome things;
"For the truth many others have also endured
"Great affliction, and thus virtue's crown have secured.
"Of all duties, devotion to truth is the chief;
"Such the scriptures all teach, such too is our belief;
"To this virtue by ways that are easy I came;
"Should I leave it, all worlds would be shadowed with shame.
"If a man born to honour dishonour receives,
"Worse than countless deaths far is the anguish it leaves.
"Why say more to a man true to faith and good sense?
"Argument in reply is a heinous offence.

DOHA 93

"At my father's feet falling and hands humbly clasping,
"To him make for me this one pray'r,
" 'This I pray, that on my behalf, father, you never
" 'May give way to worry and care.'

SUMANT RETURNS

CHAUPAI 96

"Like a father you seek my true welfare, my friend;
"Of you also I pray, for on you I depend:
"Do the best that you can, with all other claim waived,
"That from worrying for us the king may be saved."
As they heard Rama thus with the minister talk,
Great dismay troubled Guha and his village folk.
Then once more to his anger gave Lakshman full vent;
But his brother forbade it as wrong, tho' well-meant,
And because to have such things extend he was loth,
He asked Sumant to say nothing of it, on oath.
Then the king's further message Sumant to them gave:
"From the trials of the forest you Sita should save;

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"Do your best then, son Rama, that, knowing 'tis right,
"She'll to Avadh return and be saved from that plight;
"In my comfortless state let this much be contrived,
"Or I die like a fish when of water deprived.

DOHA 94

"At her mother's own home, or her mother-in-law's,
"She will have ev'ry comfort and ease;
"And until all these troubles are gone, she can live
"Here or there, just whichever may please."

CHAUPAI 97

How the king in distressed love thro' Sumant implored,
I can never in fulness and fitness record.
As his father's strong pleading he heard, Rama made
Many earnest attempts Sita so to persuade:
"If you go back, the suff'ring will all be dispelled
"In which now our friends, parents and teachers are held."
When her husband said this to her, Sita replied,
"Listen, dearest one, Lord of my life, to your bride!
"You know all things well and are most tender-hearted;
"Can shadows exist if from substance they're parted?
"Where when the sun sinks is the brightness of noon?
"Where are moonbeam and moonlight apart from the moon?"
Having thus with her husband so lovingly pled,
To the minister in tones most winsome she said,
"Just as much as my father's, my welfare you seek;
"Tho' 'tis not right to argue with you, I must speak;

DOHA 95

"Do not be then offended, sir; take it not ill
"If your wishes and words I resist;
"But apart from my lord's lotus feet, other ties
"Are as naught! Do not even exist!

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CHAUPAI 98

"I have seen my own father's luxuri'us renown;
"At his footstool seen many a king's jewelled crown;

"Tho' the comforts of home are so many and real,
"Yet apart from my husband they have no appeal.

"My lord's father, Kosala's king, rules over broad
"Fair dominions, his prowess and praise all realms laud;

"Lord of lords, the great Indra, to greet him would rise
"And would seat him on half of his throne in the skies!

"As my own are my father and mother-in-law,
"And my friends in Avadh; brighter spot none e'er saw;

"But if Rama's feet on that spot cast not their dust,
"I could not dream of bliss there, in joy could not trust,

"Long hard roads, great high mountains, the rough forest ground,
"Lions, elephants, rivers and lakes that abound,

"The wild folks of the jungle, each wild bird and beast
"With my lord will give joy, nor deter me the least!

SUMANT RETURNS

DOHA 96

"At the feet of my parents-in-law humbly falling,
"Beseech them thus on my behalf;
" 'In the forest I'll have joy and comfort; I beg you
" 'For me take no grief to yourself.

CHAUPAI 99

" 'My lord and his brother, who bear bow and quiver,
" 'Hold hero's renown, ready aye to deliver;

" 'Fear, pain and distress no road ever can offer
" 'With them; may no one for me worry and suffer.' "

Sumant, hearing Sita's calm voice, was now tossed
In distress, like a snake when its gem it has lost;

With his eyes naught he saw, with his ears naught he heard;
In his worrying grief he could not say a word.

His best Rama tried his friend's darkness to brighten,
But nothing seemed able his sadness to lighten;

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To follow with Rama he ardently pled;
Rama's answers turned back fruitless all that he said.

"Rama's orders can never be flouted," he thought,
"Fate is hard and brings all one's resistance to naught."

Bowing low in farewell to them all, he returned
In distress, like a merchant who's lost all he earned.

DOHA 97

As he drove off, his horses turned back toward Rama
And whinnied again and again;
At the sight the poor grief-stricken boatman-chief beat
His head wildly in unrelieved pain.

CHAUPAI 100

If, parting, dumb creatures were so grieved about him,
Could parents and people endure life without him?

To th' city thus Rama made Sumant go back,
And himself to the bank of the Ganges made track.

When he asked for a ferry, the boatman said, "No!
"I am too wide-awake; all about you I know!

"People say that your feet and their magic are such,
"Human beings are made in a trice at their touch;

"So a rock a fair woman became, 'tis well-known,
"And you know as do I, wood is softer than stone;

"If to make of my boat a saint's wife you're disposed,
"Then the boat will be lost and the ferry be closed;

"Tell me, how could I then my poor fam'ly support;
"I know no other trade, have no other resort;

"So if you for a ferry now ask and persist,
"Upon washing your feet first I too will insist.

CHHAND 4

"You let me bathe your feet; Then I'll give you a seat
"In my boat and take nothing as toll;
"You're the ground of my oath, You and King Dasrath both,
"What I say is the truth, 'pon my soul.

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"With his shaft, if he will, Poor me Lakshman may kill,
"And there may not be one to deliver;
"Unless this you permit, In my boat you'll not sit
"And I'll not take you over the river!"

SORATHA 4

The Merciful One gave a look
And a smile, as he heard, to his wife and his brother;
These words of the boatman he took
To his heart, full of love as they were, tho' so simple.

CHAUPAI 101

CONVERSATION OF WITH THE BOATMAN

To the ferryman, smiling, this answer he gave:
"Do whatever is needed your boat, friend, to save;
"Bring the water and wash my feet now, with no loss
"Of our time; please be quick; and then take us across."
The one whose name, when recalled, gives all assistance
To cross o'er the unbounded sea of existence,
Who all worlds, as Vishnu, in three strides traversed,
By his kindly request a poor boatman's faith nursed.
With her joy, at the sight of his feet, Ganges swelled;
But her mind by his words and their myst'ry was held.
First the ferryman, having now Rama's command,
Filled a water-bowl from the Ganges close at hand;
Then to wash those belov'd lotus-feet he began,
While his heart with its love and its fervour o'er-ran.
From the gods flowers fell as the boatman they praised,
"Such a storehouse of merit none ever has raised."

DOHA 98

He washed the Lord's feet and then with his relations
The pure sacred water he drank;
Then took Rama across and thus over life's sea
Took his forefathers, rank upon rank.

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CHAUPAI 102

With Sita and Lakshman and Guha descending,
And on the far bank of the Ganges now standing,

Lord Rama bethought, as the oarsman came near
And bowed low, "We've giv'n nothing for bringing us here."

But this thought of her dear one's heart Sita divined,
And a jewelled ring offered him, happy in mind;

Rama offered it, saying, "Take this as your toll;"
But the man clasped his feet and poured out thus his soul:

"Far the best of all gifts, lord, today I've received,
"Since from suffering, sorrow and sin I'm relieved;

"I have worked many years in the thing that engages
"My pow'rs, but today God has given full wages;

"No more do I wish, my lord, nothing request,
"But that on me your goodness and favour may rest;

"What you give when, returning, you come to these banks,
"I will take, master, then with sincere heart-felt thanks."

DOHA 99

Both Rama and Lakshman tried hard, but the boatman
Took nothing—not even a cowrie;
So Rama dismissed him and blessed him with faithful
Devotion, as heaven's best dowry.

CHAUPAI 103

Rama bathed in the stream, and with homage the worth
And the praise he there voiced of the Lord of the Earth.

To the River Goddess Sita too humbly prayed:
"To fulfil my desire, mother, grant me your aid;

"With my husband and brother again to your banks
"May I come and here render you homage and thanks."

Then, as Sita thus lovingly offered her pray'r,
A sweet voice from the pure water broke on the air:

"O Vaidehi and Rama, whom dearest I own!
"Thro' all worlds to all people your glory is known!

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"But a glance from you makes e'en the poorest as kings;
"To your will are devoted all pow'rs and all things;

"By your kindness today highest honour I've gained,
"Since to offer me worship and pray'r you have deigned;

"I give in return, dearest goddess, my blessing;
"All hopes be fulfilled that you here are expressing.

DOHA 100

"Returning to Kosala's kingdom, with husband
"And brother, your love's matchless story
"Shall find its fulfilment with all your desires,
"And the earth shall be bright with your glory."

CHAUPAI 104

These words of the Ganges in kindliest voice,
And her graciousness made grateful Sita rejoice.

Then the lord said to Guha, "You now may go home."
Hearing this, Guha's face became clouded with gloom;

CONVERSATION WITH THE BOATMAN

In a voice low and humble he started to plead,
"To my pray'r, Lord of Raghu's line, give gracious heed;

"Be this boon on me, master, a few days bestowed;
"Let me stay with you, serve you and show you the road;

"In the forest wherever you choose a fit spot,
"Let me build for you there a conveni'nt grass hut;

"As you then may command me, whatever you say,
"Raghubir, I will quickly and gladly obey."

Rama gave his permission, the surest result
Of a love so sincere; this made Guha exult;

He called up and dismissed all his villager friends,
With the comfort that on true devotion depends.

DOHA 101

Due homage to Siva, Ganesh and the Ganges
Again Rama rev'rently paid;
Then with Sita, his friend and his brother, his way
To his goal in the forest he made.

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CHAUPAI 105

He stopped 'neath a tree for his rest, as day ended,
And there by both Lakshman and Guha was tended.

Next morning, with duties completed, their faces
They set t'wards Prayag, king of all pilgrim-places.¶

There Truth is king's minister, Faith the king's wife,
Madhav, god of the junction, the friend of his life;

His treasury filled with all good for his minions;
All virtues his widespread and glori'us dominions;

Throughout his domains stand strong forts and great towers,
Which no foe can conquer, howe'er great his powers;

His forces hold all other pilgrimage spots,
Strong to overthrow all evil's armies and plots;

His great throne is the place where the three rivers meet,
With its banyan-tree awning above the king's seat;

The waves of the rivers are fans waved above him.
The sight scatters pain and want from all who love him.

DOHA 102

Great hermits and saints here have served him, and thus
The desires of their hearts have received;
His own heralds, the scriptures, aloud sing his praise
And Faith's victories by him achieved.

CHAUPAI 106

To tell all Prayag's prowess, say, who could begin?
Lion bold scatt'ring elephant-like hosts of sin.

As this sacred place, with which none else is compared,
Rama saw, he—Joy's Fount—in its joy himself shared;

The Pilgrimage-King and his glory unbounded,
He there to his three dear companions expounded.

¶ Near Allahabad, where the Ganges, Yamuna and underground Sarasvati meet.

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Obeisance he made, then each garden and grove,
As they saw it, he told of with warm earnest love.

So they came to and saw where the Tri-Junction flows,
Which when seen and recalled ev'ry blessing bestows;

They bathed there, before it with glad homage falling,
On Siva and local divinities calling.

To saint Bharadvaj then went Rama with haste
And paid rev'rence; the hermit the young prince embraced;

For his joy the saint could not find fit word or speech,
As tho' now at long last heaven's joy he could reach.

DOHA 103

He gave Rama his blessing, and deep in his heart
He thought thankfully of joy now given;
It seemed, the reward of his virtue to bring
To his sight, God had come from His heaven.

CHAUPAI 107

WITH BHARADVAJA IN PRAYAG

He asked how they fared; to a seat then he led them,
And with all affection and honour he fed them;

Fruits, herbs and roots brought he, himself the selecter,
And gave them to eat—tasty all as of nectar.

With Sita and Lakshman and friend Guha there,
Rama ate with delight of this fine simple fare.

Then with Rama at ease, all his weariness flown,
Bharadvaj to him said in a soft, modest tone,

"Now ev'ry austerity, pilgrimage, off'ring,
"All pray'r, contemplation, detachment and suff'ring,

"All practices pious, each earnest endeavour,
"Today by your vision are fruitful forever;

"Supreme gain and happiness—naught else is needed;
"All high hopes and aims, seeing you, have succeeded!

"Now grant me in kindness the one boon I crave,
"Simple love for your dear lotus-feet may I have.

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DOHA 104

"Till in thought, word and deed he becomes wholly yours,
"Without any deceit or reserve,
"Tho' he try many plans, man cannot even dream
"Of true joy; such he'll never deserve."

CHAUPAI 108

At these words of the saint and the warm love he showed,
Rama's modest heart thrilled and with joy overflowed;

In return, the great hermit and saint he extolled,
As to all his companions his greatness he told:

"King of saintly ones, he whom to honour you deign,
"All life's highest endowments and greatness will gain."

With each other all gestures and words they employed
Of respect, and unspeakable pleasure enjoyed.

The men of Prayag, the religious and prudent,
Each hermit, ascetic, sage, saint, priest and student,

To see Dasrath's sons, as the news set them longing,
At saint Bharadvaja's cell quickly came thronging;

They all made to Rama their humble obeisance,
And feasted eyes on him with happy complaisance;

There blessing they gave, highest bliss they achieved,
And talked long of the beautiful vision received.

DOHA 105

Rama rested that night, in the morning he bathed
At thrice holy Prayag; then glad-hearted,
He bowed to the saint and with Sita, Lakshman
And his man, for the woods again started.

CHAUPAI 109

As they left, Rama asked of the saint, for love's sake,
"Kindly tell us, my master, the best way to take,"

Bharadvaj gave his answer to this with a smile,
"To you all ways are easy, o'er every mile!"

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Then to show them the way some young students he called;
Fifty answered, by this happy prospect enthralled!

Each one loved Lord Rama and, wishing to show it,
Said, "I've seen the road to the woods and I know it!"

The saint for their great virtue four youths selected,
Which thro' many worthy lives they had effected.

Sent off thus, and offering rev'rence devout,
Once again on his way Rama gladly set out.

All the people, whenever a village they neared,
Ran to share in the vision to all men endeared;

Their life, seeing him, was now fruitful and hallowed;
They joyous returned, but their hearts Rama followed.

DOHA 106

Rama courte'usly sent back the students, who gained
Their heart's wish and the fruit of their study;
Descending the Yamuna's bank, he there bathed
In its water as dark as his body.

CHAUPAI 110

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

The riverside people all ran at the news
Of his coming; "I've nothing to do," was the ruse;

At the sight of such beauty, as there the three stood,
They were thankful at sharing in fortune so good.

"Who are you and from whence came you?" none of them asked;
They were eager to know, tho' their longing they masked;

But the ones who were older, both wise and mature,
Recognised 'twas Prince Rama by signs clear and sure;

They told all they knew of his greatness and glory,
And why the king banished him—told the whole story.

At what they were told they were all deeply pained;
"What the king and queen did was not right," they complained.

(At that time an ascetic came into the crowd,
Young in years but his virtuous force well avowed,

Hermit-clad, much devoted to Rama—I know it;
His nature and name are not known to this poet,

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DOHA 107

His body was thrilled and his eyes filled with tears,
As he recognised there his own god;
Down before him he fell like a log; beyond telling
His state, as he lay on the sod.

CHAUPAI 111

Rama raised him, and he in the Lord's loving hold,
Was as one the stone finding that turns all to gold.
All onlookers said, as they watched, "This communion
"Shows love and life's chief end in bodily union."
At Lakshman's feet next the young devotee fell;
Lakshman raised him; with love his heart also did swell;
Dust from Sita's fair feet to his brow he applied;
Sita blessed him as tho' her own son at her side;
Next the boatman gave his salutation, and he
Welcomed Guha—known as Rama's true devotee.
He drank in beauty's nectar from well-filled eye-cups,
Glad as one who, when hungry, on finest fare sups;
Then he bowed low again at the Lord's lotus feet;
Rama welcomed this love, made his joy thus complete;
He asked leave to go, strong of heart and rejoicing;
Then left them, his gladness and love boldly voicing.)
The beautiful three then folks watched, as they must,
And in loving concern their affairs they discussed:
"Tell me, what kind of parents are they who would send
"To the forest such beautiful children, my friend?"

DOHA 108

Rama then dismissed Guha, his friend and guide, giving
Him counsels all kindly and fitting;
The boatman at once to his own home returned,
To the word of his master submitting.

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CHAUPAI 112

Sita, Rama and Lakshman again, with clasped hands,
Paid to Yamuna river what rev'rence demands;

Then her praises, as born of the Lord of the Day,
They uplifted as gladly they went on their way.

While trav'lling they met on the road many others,
Who lovingly said as they saw the two brothers,

"Your bodies show signs of the offspring of kings;
"What we see makes us wonder and doubt at such things;

"When here we see you and with bare feet you travel,
"The stars tell us lies, truth we cannot unravel;

"Along this rough road woods and mountains are strung,
"And this fair woman with you, so tender and young;

"There are lions and elephants on every hand;
"As companions we'll go with you, if you command;

"We will gladly accompany you, till you tell
"Us to leave you, and then we will bid you farewell."

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 109

Thus they offered their help, their eyes full of glad tears
And their bodies with love all a-tremble;
But Rama dismissed them to go on their way,
With voice courteous, kindly and humble.

CHAUPAI 113

To each village and town where the travellers stayed
On the road, praise by gods and by spirits was paid:

"By great virtue in fortunate moment were these
"Places built, so well-favoured to comfort and please."

Even Paradise could not for joy with that place
Be compared, where Lord Rama's feet left their clear trace.

Those who lived by the roadside, of fortunate birth,
Won the praises of heav'n for their virtuous worth;

Upon Rama, dark-hued like a cloud in the skies,
And on Sita and Lakshman they feasted their eyes.

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Ev'ry time Rama bathed in a river or stream,
Heaven's envious founts made its praise their great theme;

And whenever he rested beneath a tree's shade,
Highest praise in its honour the heav'nly tree made;

Fragrant dust from his fair lotus-feet earth received,
And at last in assured happy fortune believed.

DOHA 110

The clouds up above gave him shade, heaven's hosts
Brightest blossoms upon his path strewed,
As looking at animals, birds, woods and hills,
His way onward Lord Rama pursued.

CHAUPAI 114

Whenever these trav'llers, with love's happy load,
To a village came near by the side of the road,

Old and young, men and women, all ran to the spot
At the news; each his home and his duties forgot;

When a sight of the three and their beauty was gained,
All rejoiced; vision now had its purpose attained.

With emotion all bodies were thrilled, all eyes moist;
Ev'ryone seeing these two young heroes rejoiced;

Beyond words their condition; such joy did abound
As when beggars a heap of heav'n's jewels have found.

Each thoughtfully gave to his friend wise tuition,
"Our eyes can attain now their fullest fruition."

While looking at Rama, one—gladly amazed—
Would go lovingly with him a way as he gazed;

To his heart one the vision thro' eye-gate would draw,
Smitten in mind and body by all that he saw.

DOHA 111

When they came to a fine shady fig-tree, one spread
On the ground mats of soft leaves and grass,
And said, "Take a rest here for a short while, or better,
"Stay here and in sleep the night pass."

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CHAUPAI 115

Then an earthenware jar filled with water one brought,
And "Refresh yourself, master, from this," he besought.

Their loving words hearing, their warm hearts beholding,
Lord Rama, in kindliest thought all enfolding,

And very well knowing that Sita was tired,
With her rested a while in the shade as desired.

Each man and each woman there looked on with rapture
Such beauty and grace as might well all hearts capture;

Around him they stood, each one still as a stock,
Gazing on his moon-face like a rapt pheasant flock.

His slim form, straight and dark as a young *tamal* tree,
Was a sight even Love-gods might well wish to see;

And Lakshman, from head to foot shining like lightning;
A vision the eyes of all onlookers bright'ning;

In hermit dress clad, at their side quiver slung,
Bow and shaft in their hands, strong and firm tho' so young.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 112

On their heads thick hair knotted; their chests big and broad;
Long, strong arms; big and bright too their eyes;
Beads of sweat on each forehead; each face round and bright
As the full autumn moon at its rise.

CHAUPAI 116

This young handsome princely pair beggars description;
I have not the power for worthy ascription.

On these three, in whom beauty's marks all combined
People gazed, giving fully their heart, soul and mind;

They looked long and looked hard, faint with love at the sight,
Dazed and held just like deers when they gaze at a light.

Then the women in hesitant love made approach,
That a question to Sita they shyly might broach;

They pressed her feet gently and tho' words were meagre,
They asked her their question in tones soft and eager;

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"We've something to ask you, we humbly confess it,
"But woman-like hesitate, lady, to press it;

"Don't be angry with us, forgive our presumption;
"Remember we're village folks lacking in gumption;

"These plainly are princes, so handsome and fine
"That the splendour of jewels and gold they outshine;

DOHA 113

"One dark and one fair in hue, both of them treas'ries
"Of joyous delight, tho' so youthful;
"With bright moon-like faces, eyes like autumn lilies,
"They charm us; we're curious and truthful!

CHAUPAI 117

"They openly put countless Love-gods to shame;
"What relation, fair lady, with them do you claim?"

At their eager enquiry, so lovingly mild,
Sita modestly blushed as she inwardly smiled;

She looked first at the women and then at the ground,
Cause for shyness in telling of each youth she found;

In her voice like a bird's, as her fawn-like eyes drooped,
She said lovingly to all the women there grouped:

"The young fair one, whose grace is delightful to see,
"Is named Lakshman, my brother-in-law now is he."

Brows lifted and face with her veil's border covered,
T'wards Rama she looked and her gaze o'er him hovered—

"My husband"—her eyes gave the signal bewitching,
Aslant, like the tail of a wagtail quick twitching;

The young village women were wholly entranced,
Like a beggar who on heaps of jewels has chanced.

DOHA 114

They fell down at her feet and this blessing they gave,
By their love overwhelmed and transported:
"With him may you happily live, while the earth
"By the serpent divine is supported.

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CHAUPAI 118

"As Parvati to Siva, be you ever dear
"To your lord; and with us may your favour rest here."
Then with clasped hands they made this their pray'rful refrain,
"If you come, when returning, by this road again,
"Let each of us see you and serve you as servant."
So, seeing them thirsty with love full and fervent,
To all of them Sita encouragement gave,
Just as moonbeams the lilies refreshingly lave.
Lakshman then, knowing well what his brother desired,
Of the villagers humbly their best road enquired;
As they heard—men and women, their gladness was chilled,
Bodies shook with their grief and their eyes with tears filled;
With minds joyless and darkened, as tho' in ill-health,
"God has robbed us," they said, "after giving us wealth."
Then knowing that all men to Fate are subjected,
The three with good heart to their road they directed.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 115

With Lakshman and Sita, the Lord Raghunath
To the forest his way further wended;
The people, returning, spoke lovingly of them,
And after them ev'ry heart tended.

CHAUPAI 119

The people, on seeing them go, were dismayed;
In their grieved hearts the blame on Lord Brahma was laid;
They said, feeling fortune had never been worse,
"All God's ways and His doings seem wholly perverse;
"He is thoughtless and heartless, he goodness forgets!
"He has spotted the moon! After rising it sets!
"Heart's desires are in heaven! The ocean is salt!
"These young princes he sends to the woods for no fault!

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"If such people as these to the jungle are sent,
"Then for whom are life's pleasures and comforts all meant?

"If these, as we see them, bare-footed must wander,
"'Tis vain wealth and skill on fine chariots to squander!

"If these must on grass and leaf mats lay their heads,
"Then for whom and what purpose are soft, restful beds?

"When he sends such as these to live under the trees,
"Why make royal abodes with such labour for ease?

DOHA 116

"When in hermit's coarse cloth and hair knot these must wander,
"So beautiful, young and well-born,
"God in vain has made all kinds of gems and fine clothes!
"By these princes should such things be worn.

CHAUPAI 120

"If wild herbs, roots and fruits these young people must eat,
"Wholly useless is nectar-like food, rich and sweet!"

Said one, "These were not made by the gods, but to birth
"By their own power came with such beauty and worth;

"In the scriptures the things God has made you will find;
"The things heard, seen and grasped by man's ear, eye and mind;

"Search creation, all worlds to the farthermost bound,
"'Mongst things made are such females and males ever found?

"When he saw them, God's mind by their beauty was stirred,
"Others like them he tried to make by his own word;

"But none came to birth, tho' he tried; when hope vanished,
"In envy these three to the forest he banished."

Another said, "I have but little of learning,
"But think myself blessed and fruitful my yearning;

"Who sees, or has seen, or will see them, I count
"Highly virtuous, reaching joy's full-flowing fount."

DOHA 117

Of the trav'llers they lovingly talked in this way,
And at last said, their eyes with tears filling,

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"How can these young delicate bodies endure
"The road's trials, e'en tho' they are willing?"

CHAUPAI 121

The women were all in their love deeply worried,
Like quails that at twilight are flustered and flurried:
"Hard roads—tender lotus-like feet," thus comparing
They said in distressed tones, their troubled hearts baring,
"When each tender foot in the dust softly sinks,
"As our hearts at the sight, earth when touched also shrinks;
"To the woods when God sent them, this also he owed,
"That with fragrant soft flowers he brighten the road;
"This one boon to ask of him in hope we make bold,
"This bright vision may we in our eyes ever hold."
Many people who were not there just at that time,
Missed the vision of Rama and Sita sublime;
When they heard of their charm, anxious hearts to allay,
They enquired, "How far now have they gone on their way?"
The strong ones ran quickly, caught up with the party,
And saw them; then turned back with praise glad and hearty.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 118

The women, the old and the young, the sight missing,
With cries and laments their hands wrung;
In this fashion, wherever Lord Rama arrived
People, gripped by his love, to him clung.

CHAUPAI 122

In place after place 'twas the same happy story,
On seeing him who is the Sun-Kingdom's glory.
Some people, on hearing a part of the news,
On the king and the queen poured their hearty abuse;
Others said, "He's done well; he has gladdened our eyes
"With this vision of beauty, a happy surprise."

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But some women and men, as together they walked,
Of these matters more simply and lovingly talked:
"Happy father and mother who gave them their birth;
"Happy home whence they came of all homes upon earth!
"Blest hills and dales, hamlets and woods, all the places
"Wherever these princely ones show their bright faces!
"The lord in creating them found highest pleasure,
"And now looks upon them as love's greatest treasure".
Of these trav'lling youths spread the story and fame
By all roads in the forest, wherever they came.

DOHA 119

As with Lakshman and Sita he went on his way
Thro' the woods, glad at each gladd'ning sight,
He, the Sun to the lotus of Raghu's great line,
To his people gave constant delight.

CHAUPAI 123

Rama led, Lakshman followed; as onward they strode,
With their kingly grace even their hermit's garb glowed;
Between them walked Sita, in wondrous charm greater
Than *Maya*¶ between the soul and the Creator;
Again, to my mind she moved there in like fashion
As Loveliness walks between Springtime and Passion;
Or, trying another fit likeness to muster,
As 'tween Moon and Mercury shines a star-cluster.
She carefully, modestly walked, as was meet,
In between the marks made by her Lord Rama's feet;
But their brother to blot out their foot-prints was loth,
So he walked with his feet right and left of them both.
Birds and beasts as they saw them fell under control
Of their beauty; the hearts of them all Rama stole.

¶ Illusion.

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So great was the love of these three, to declare it
Defies me; there's nothing with which to compare it!

DOHA 120

The people who saw these dear trav'llers, the brothers
And Sita, with loving emotion
Were easily carried, without the least effort,
At once over life's vast dread ocean.

CHAUPAI 124

Yes, even today and in dreaming if these
Dearest wayfarers in his heart any man sees,

He at once at the realm of Lord Rama arrives,
By a path that the greatest saint hardly contrives.

Raghubir, ev'ry time he saw Sita was tired,
And when water and shade were at hand as desired,

He would halt and would eat with them both fresh green food;
Then at dawn, after bathing, their road they pursued.

They saw beautiful woods, lakes and hills on the way,
And to Valmiki's hermitage came one fine day.

WITH VALMIKI

The saint's home, they saw, in true pleasure abounded,
By charming hills, forest and waters surrounded;

In ponds lotuses and in groves flowers bloomed;
Over all, filled with nectar, bees lazily zoomed;

Birds and beasts ate together, glad cries filled the air;
Of their terrors and enmities no sign was there.

DOHA 121

The young lotus-eyed Rama rejoiced when he saw
This delightful and pure hermit-home;
The great saint quickly went out to give him glad welcome,
On hearing that Rama had come.

CHAUPAI 125

To the saint, as they met, Rama rev'rently bowed;
With his blessing the saint warm affection avowed;

His eyes, having seen Rama, had all they needed,
As he his three guests to his *ashram* preceded;

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The dearest of all guests this day he had greeted;
Rejoicing and rev'rent, he bade them be seated;

He had fresh delicious fruits brought as they sate,
Of which all the three travellers hungrily ate.

With his joy saint Valmiki at heart was inspired,
As his eyes here on bodily bliss gazed untired.

Rama, folding his lotus-like hands, spoke this word
That brought fresh charm and gladness to all those who heard:

"King of saints, with all worlds like a plum in your hand,
"You see past, present, future; all things understand."

Then he told the whole tale in the saintly one's ears,
How the queen to the woods sent him for these long years.

DOHA 122

"Brother Bharat as king, and fulfilment thus given
"To mother's wish and father's word,
"Above all, sight of you, reverend sir, all these boons
"By past merits are on me conferred.

CHAUPAI 126

"My lord, of your sacred feet gaining this vision,
"My good deeds have made for me fruitful provision;

"Now tell us the place, sir, and give us your permit,
"Where we may live, giving distress to no hermit.

"That king without fire burns in furious flame,
"Who to saints and ascetics brings trouble and shame;

"To please Brahmans and priests is the root of all joys,
"But their anger a myriad fam'lies destroys;

"So, with this in mind, word of some place to me give
"Where with brother and wife I may quietly live;

"By your kindness, we'll build there of leaves and of grass
"A hut charming tho' small, and in peace our days pass."

As he heard Rama's words, frank and void of complaint,
"That is good, very good," said the wise, learned saint;

"Pride of Raghu's line, such words from you we expect,
"One who guards truth and scripture with earnest respect.

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CHHAND 5

"Rama, truth ever guarding, And all good rewarding,
"By your kindly will, Lord of all,
"Janki, mother of earth, Gives to all things their birth,
"Their full growth and their end, great and small.

"Lakshman, true blessing giving, To lifeless and living,
"As Shesh-nag¶ bears earth on his hoods;
"You are born as a king, Hosts of demons to bring
"To destruction and thus save the gods.

SORATHA 5

"Your true nature and being transcend
"All man's utterance, Rama, all wisdom and knowledge;
"The scriptures declare without end
"You are limitless, changeless, beyond all description.

CHAUPAI 127

"As you look on the play of the world and of chance,
" 'Tis your hand moves the three mighty gods in their dance;

"Your deep mystery even to them is unknown;
"How could others such knowledge attain to or own?

"He can know you on whom you the knowledge bestow;
"Be one with you indeed, if you thus he may know!

"Devoted ones know you, O Lord, by your favour;
"You are to their hearts as a sweet-smelling savour.

"Your being is unbounded knowledge and bliss;
"Those who know you as ever-unchanging know this.

"You have taken this form, and you speak and behave
"As a human king, gods and the saintly to save;

"Seeing you and your ways, Rama, hearing your voice,
"Foolish men are bewildered, but wise men rejoice;

"Always true, always right, is what you do and say;
"As you wish and pull strings, so our part we must play.

¶ The earth-supporting serpent.

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DOHA 123

"You have asked of me where you can stay; now give heed
"To this hesitant question of mine;
"Is there any place where you are not? Show me one,
"And that place then to you I'll assign!"

CHAUPAI 128

As he listened to these loving words of the saint,
Rama inwardly smiled, but with bashful restraint.

Saint Valmiki then laughingly said once again,
In a voice that by sweetness made love very plain,

"Listen, Rama, while I of the places now tell,
"Where, with Sita and Lakshman, close by you may dwell:

"The people who give as the ocean their ear,
"And your story drink in as streams, eager to hear,

"Who receive and receive, but have never too much,
"A fit dwelling for you is the heart of all such.

"The people whose eyes for your vision athirst,
"Gaze like rain-birds that watch for the rain-cloud to burst,

"Who by strange waters—seas, streams and lakes—will not stop,
"But are happy to get of your beauty one drop,

"Their heart is your shrine, with true gladness upwelling;
"With Lakshman and Sita make that place your dwelling.

DOHA 124

"The people who gather like swans the rich pearls
"Of your virtues that lie thickly strewed
"In the charming pure lake of your doings and fame;
"In their heart, Rama, make your abode.

CHAUPAI 129

"The people whose nostrils receive in each place,
"With delight, the sweet odour, my lord, of your grace;

"Who eat food that faith first of all to you offers,
"And wear clothes and gems as received from your coffers;

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"Who rev'rently bow seeing god, priest and teacher,
"And show humble love as their spirit and nature;

"Whose hands daily serve at the feet of their lord,
"And whose hearts in no other but you are assured;

"Those whose feet walk as pilgrims with you in your ways,
"Make their hearts your own dwelling throughout all their days.

"The people who make in your name ev'ry pray'r,
"Who with dear ones bring worship to you ev'rywhere,

"Who to you sacrifices and off'rings uplift,
"Who feed Brahmans and give to them many a gift,

"Who consider their master more even than you,
"And with honour and love render all service due;

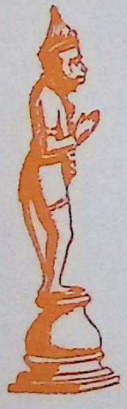
DOHA 125

"Whose one longing, when other hearts wholly are yours,
"Has abundantly, happily fruited;
"With Sita and Lakshman dwell you in their heart;
"'Tis a place wholly worthy and suited.

CHAUPAI 130

"The mind with no anger, lust, pride, foolish notions,
"No prejudice, enmity, greed, wild emotions,

"No arrogance, falsehood, illusive deceit,
"Such a mind, Raghurai, for your dwelling is meet.



"Those who seek others' good, hold their love and esteem,
"To whom praise and abuse, joy and pain alike seem,

"Who with thoughtfulness speak only truth and in love,
"In your care rest when sleeping, or when waking move,

"Who only in you see their way of salvation,
"In these dear hearts make, Rama, your habitation.

"Who look on another's wife as their own mother,
"And count as rank poison the wealth of another,

"Who when others prosper express sincere gladness,
"And lovingly share their distresses and sadness.

"To whom you are dearer than all else beside,
"In their hearts as your sacred shrine, Rama, abide.

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DOHA 126

"Those to whom, my dear son, you are father and mother,
"Their master, their teacher, their friend,
"With your brother and Sita abide in their hearts
"As your sanctu'ry, world without end.

CHAUPAI 131

"Who shun others' faults and their virtues acknowledge,
"Who suffer for cows and the priest's divine college,

"Who earnest support to the right always give,
"Hearts of such men are places where you may well live.

"Who their failings know well and your goodness attest,
"Upon you in all matters with confidence rest,

"And devotion to Rama count dearer than life,
"In their hearts you may live with Vaidehi your wife.

"Who position, society, prestige and wealth,
"Even duty, dear family, household and health,

"In devotion to you all these things will forsake,
"In the hearts of all such faithful ones your home make.

"Who for heaven, or hell, or release do not care,
"Since you, bow and shaft-bearer, they see ev'rywhere,

"Who to you are devoted in deed, word and thought,
"In their loving hearts, Rama, your home may be sought.

DOHA 127

"Those who ev'rywhere, always, will ask nothing more,
"But sincere love for you, lord, alone;
"In such hearts thro' eternity make your abode,
" 'Tis a place you may claim as your own."

CHAUPAI 132

In this manner the saint many places revealed;
And to Rama his loving words greatly appealed.

Then he said ocne again, "Listen now, while I tell
"Of a fair quiet spot that will suit you right well.

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"Go and take up your dwelling on Chitrakut hill,¶
"Such a place all your needs can conveni'ntly fill;

"In those fine hills and forests you'll find all you want,
"Birds and beasts of all kinds make it their quiet haunt;

"A river, whose fame is by scripture related,
"Which Atri's wife by austere powers created,

"Mandakini, flows to the Ganges, and sin
"Can destroy like a malicious man-eating djinn.

"Saint Atri and others live there, who their bodies
"Subdue by severe penance, pray'rs and deep studies.

"Go Rama and make all their efforts succeed;
"On that hill bestow glory that's glory indeed.

DOHA 128

When Valmiki had told of the hill Chitrakut's
Fame and glory, unbounded, unscathed,
The two brothers and Sita went there, and at once
In the pure near-by river they bathed.

LIVING ON HILL CHITRAKUTA

CHAUPAI 133

Rama said, "This place, Lakshman, seems good ev'ry way;
"Now please look for a spot where these years we may stay."

A spur Lakshman saw, by the northern bank bounded,—
"Bow-like on three sides by a ravine surrounded;

"Its shafts gifts and tem'prance, the river its string,
"And its target all ills that this vile age may bring;

"The huntsman the hill Chitrakut firm and constant,
"His aim never misses, but kills in an instant."

The place Lakshman showed them, as thus he reported,
And seeing the spot his plan Rama supported.

The gods, knowing Rama this home had approved,
To the spot, led by Indra, all eagerly moved;

¶ Growse has a long note on the geography and condition of the place,

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As the wild simple jungle folk came they disguised;
Two neat grass and leaf dwellings they quickly devised;
The great charm of these cottages cannot be told,
One was small, one was large Sita-Rama to hold.

DOHA 129

There Rama, by Lakshman and Sita attended,
Lived royally in huts of grass;
As tho' here must the Love-god with Beauty and Spring-time
His days in a hermit's garb pass.

CHAUPAI 134

Gods and seraphs, the guardians of place and of time,
In those days came to Chitrakut, hill most sublime;
In deep rev'rence for Rama, heads bowed and heads raised,
They rejoiced at the vision as on him they gazed;
They all said, as upon him bright flowers they poured,
"At long last we have found again our gracious lord."
Their distresses they told him and asked for his aid;
Home returning, each one highest praise to him paid.
All the hermits and saintly ones came at the news
That in Chitrakut Rama now lived a recluse;
With due honour the light of Raghu's royal race
Greeted all of the saints as they came to the place;
Ev'ry saint in his love to his breast Rama clasped,
And, in blessing him, life's richest fruitfulness grasped;
This wonder at heart each saint saw and recorded,
And knew all his hopes and pray'rs amply rewarded.

DOHA 130

The Lord paid due honours to each saintly group,
And then gave them his leave to depart;
They returned to their cells, to perform sacrifices
And rigours and pray'rs with new heart.

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CHAUPAI 135

When the forest folk, Kols and Kirats, got the word,
They rejoiced as when of coming wealth one has heard;

Quickly making leaf-platters sweet fresh fruit to hold,
They came rushing like beggars who scramble for gold;

Some who had seen and told of the brothers before,
Now by others were asked, as they hurried, for more.

Of Raghubir's beauty thus teller and hearer,
In happy hope, to the blest vision came nearer;

They saw him at last, bowed with eager delight,
And presented their gifts, gladdened now by the sight;

Where they were, like drawn pictures, transfixed they all stood,
Bodies thrilled and eyes filled with a happy tear flood.

Rama, knowing with love they were gripped and o'erwhelmed,
Their emotions with courteous loving words calmed.

As they bowed there before him again and again,
In these humble words raised they their joyous refrain:

LIVING ON HILL CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 131

"We know, since your vision to us has been given,
"We have our own good lord and master;
"Your coming, Kosala's lord, now will assure us
"All good and avert all disaster.

CHAUPAI 136

"Blessed forests, fields, hills and roads where you have placed
"Your divine feet and where your dear foot-prints are traced;

"Thrice blessed those birds, beasts and all jungle creatures,
"Whose birth bears full fruit as they gaze on your features;

"And we with our fam'lies are blest above all;
"We your vision have gained, at your feet we may fall!

"You chose this fair spot as your home with good reason;
"You'll live here in comfort in every season;

"From elephants, tigers and snakes we'll preserve you;
"Whatever you need, we will willingly serve you,

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"Each forest and cavern, each hill and ravine,
"Is well-known to us, lord, ev'ry foot have we seen;

"When you wish it, for hunting good plans we will make,
"And will show you each water-fall, streamlet and lake;

"With our fam'lies we'll serve you—our happiest task;
"Never hesitate help to command, sir, or ask."

DOHA 132

He whose ways neither scriptures nor sages can fathom,
Of infinite mercy and mild,
To the words of the forest folk listened intent,
As a father gives ear to his child.

CHAUPAI 137

To Lord Rama there's nothing but love that is dear;
Know and heed this, all you who are willing to hear.

The forest folk Rama with love fed and nourished;
By his words their own love grew stronger and flourished.

Then as he dismissed them they rev'rently bowed,
And returning they all sang his praises aloud.

As the brothers with Sita thus in the woods dwelt,
Great the joy that the sages and deities felt;

And the jungle itself, since Lord Rama came there,
On all hands was increasingly pleasant and fair;

On trees of all kinds one could see fruits and flowers,
And canopied creepers o'er-hung shady bowers;

By nature all things heav'nly grace seemed to show,
As tho' heav'n they had left for earth's gardens below;

O'er the flowers buzzed beautiful bees in great swarms;
Fragrant breezes blew soft with their comforting charms.

DOHA 133

Birds of beauty and song—parrot, cuckoo, blue-jay,
Peacock, *bulbul*, quail, partridge and pheasant,
Flashed colours and ravished the heart with their songs,
To the eye and the ear always pleasant.

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CHAUPAI 138

Here the elephant, lion, boar, monkey and deer
Lived as one, and all enmity lost with all fear;

When Rama pursued them, deer herds unaffrighted
Were held by his charms and gazed on him delighted.

Seeing Rama's fair forest, the gardens on earth
Of the gods coveted its rare beauty and worth;

Rivers—Ganga, Yam'na, Sarasvati sublime,
Narmada, Godav'ri, those in every clime,

Ev'ry ocean and sea, ev'ry lake, ev'ry stream
Sang the praise of Mandakini fair and supreme;

Ev'ry mountain and hill, both of east and of west,
Mandar, Meru, Kailas, Himalaya 'nd the rest,

In whatever place found and whatever its name,
Of the hill Chitrakut sang the glory and fame;

Greatest joy filled the heart of the whole Vindhya range,
It had gained such esteem without effort or change.

LIVING ON HILL CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 134

Said the gods day and night, "Here on Chitrakut hill
"Highest favours and merits combine,
"Ev'ry bird, ev'ry animal richly to bless,
"Ev'ry plant, ev'ry tree, ev'ry vine."

CHAUPAI 139

All the creatures with eyes, Rama looking upon,
Found their birth had borne fruit and all sorrow was gone;

Things inanimate, touched by the dust of his feet,
Gained a heavenly heritage, blessing complete;

The hills, rocks and forests were all happy-hearted,
Since to them such holiness now was imparted.

How tell of the glory in places abiding,
Where Rama, the ocean of joy, was residing;

Where Vishnu, with Sita and Lakshman, had taken
As Rama abode, milky ocean forsaken?

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The pleasure that here to the jungle belonged,
Bard divine could not tell, tho' he be thousand-tongued,

Then how can I tell it, poor I, meanly-gifted?
Can high mountains by a pond tortoise be lifted?

All service that Lakshman as brother could render
Was given, with courtesy loving and tender.

DOHA 135

With thoughts upon Rama and Sita each moment,
And knowing their love too was strong,
Not once, even in dreams, for his friends, home and parents
Did Lakshman regretfully long.

CHAUPAI 140

With Rama there Sita was happily living,
No thought to home, city or family giving;

Each moment, beholding her lord's countenance,
She rejoiced like a moon-pheasant held in a trance;

Ev'ry day, as she saw Rama's love had increased,
Like the cuckoo in day-time her joy never ceased;

The woods, as her heart's love at Rama's feet rested,
With pleasures of countless Avadhs were invested;

With Rama, the grass hut was love's very station,
Each beast and each bird a beloved relation;

Dear as her own parents the saints with their wives;
Roots and fruits held the sweetness of heavenly hives;

With her Rama grass mats much more restfulness gave,
Than the Love-god's own couches in thousands could have.

Could the one on whom gazing mere men become kings,
Be ensnared by the pleasures of sensuous things?

DOHA 136

If, Lord Rama recalling, all sensuous pleasures
Are like blades of grass, a mere trifle,
No wonder that in the World-mother, his Sita,
His love all such longings should stifle!

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CHAUPAI 141

The things that to Lakshman and Sita would ever
Give happiness, Rama would say and endeavour;

The stories and legends of old times he told them;
When list'ning, a deep quiet joy would enfold them.

Sometimes in his heart thoughts of Avadh would rise;
At such times tears of longing and love filled his eyes;

Recalling his parents, his brothers and neighbours,
Recalling all Bharat's sincere, loving labours,

The kindly one's heart seemed to sorrow appointed,
But faced all with courage, since times were disjointed.

Both Lakshman and Sita, as Rama they watched,
Were pained with him, as shadow and man are attached;

Then the kindly and patient one, seeing the grief
Of his dear ones—he who gives to true hearts relief,

Stories sacred and old would begin to recount,
From which flowed for his hearers a comforting fount.

LIVING ON HILL CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 137

There with Lakshman and Sita in those grassy huts
Rama lived in this simple resplendence,
Like Indra in heaven with Jayant and Sachi,
His son and his wife, as attendants.

CHAUPAI 142

O'er his brother and wife the Lord kept watch and ward,
As the eyelid the eye and its pupil must guard.

Lakshman faithfully Sita and Rama there served,
As by worldly men well are their bodies preserved.

He who brings to dumb creatures, to gods and saints, good,
Thus in comfort and peace passed his days in the wood,

Rama's coming and life in the woods has been told;
How Sumant came to Avadh I now will unfold:

Leaving Rama, the boatmen, when on their way back,
Saw Sumant and his chariot there in the track;

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The great grief of the minister thus seen and heard
Cannot fitly be told, 'tis beyond pen and word;

"O Rama, O Sita, O Lakshman,"—thus calling,
He lay on the ground in his anguish appalling.

The horses t'wards Rama's road looked as they neighed;
Like a bird robbed of wings they were wholly dismayed;

DOHA 138

They were eating no grass, they were drinking no water,
Their eyes were all flooded with tears;
Seeing Rama's own horses in this state, the boatmen
Were seized with fresh sorrows and fears.

CHAUPAI 143

Then their leader said patiently, seeing him torn
By such grief, "Come, Sumant, play the man; do not mourn;

"You are learned and well know life's highest ideal;
"Give your courage a chance, tho' God's anger you feel."

He told stories to show how such things should be faced,
Then Sumant in his chariot once more he placed.

RETURN OF SUMANT TO AVADH

But helpless with grieving, Sumant could not drive it,
His heart ached with Rama's loss; could he survive it?

The horses reared up, plunged and would not be driven,
Like wild beasts to harness just then newly given;

They'd go a few steps, stop and turn back again,
As tho' suff'ring, with Rama away, sharpest pain;

When Rama's or Sita's name anyone uttered,
T'wards him as they neighed their eyes turned and ears fluttered;

The pain of those horses was past all belief,
As with head jewels lost a snake knows no relief.

DOHA 139

The head boatman, poor Guha, himself was distressed
At the state of the minister's horses;
He chose from his followers four trusty men,
Sent to lead the beasts home in their courses.

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CHAUPAI 144

The chariot and minister having despatched,
Guha's grief with the grief of the rest could be matched;

As the boatmen to Avadh the chariot returned,
At each step and each moment they too deeply mourned.

Of these mourners, the state of Sumant seemed the worst;
All the way he cried, "Rama is gone, life is curst;

"At the last this vile body will die and be taken,
"All glory die too if by Rama forsaken;

"My life must be bound by some infamous crime!
"Oh, why does it not come to an end at this time?

"Alas! Foolish my heart in its vain ignorance,
"That it breaks not in two, tho' it now has the chance!"

His hands wringing, head beating, his grief he outpoured,
Like a miser when suddenly robbed of his hoard;

Like a warrior bold and renowned, who can wield
Mighty weapons, but now has to run from the field;

RETURN OF SUMANT TO AVADH

DOHA 140

Like a Brahman priest, holy, high-born and discerning,
Well-read in the full Vedic course,
Who has drunk by mistake drunkard's liquor and now
Shows regret, such was Sumant's remorse;

CHAUPAI 145

Like ladies highborn, who for virtue are noted,
In thought, word and deed to their husbands devoted,

But now forced to leave them with weeping and wailing—
Such grief o'er the minister's heart was prevailing.

Sight dim, as his eyes with his tears were suffused;
Deafened ears, and a mind all distraught and confused;

And thro' lips dry and colourless came panting breath;
This one thought, "He will come back in time," held off death.

As distressing the awful pale sight that there filled
Watchers' vision, as one who his parents has killed;

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In his mind his regretful remorse rang death's knell,
Like a sinner's thoughts knowing he's making for hell;

In silence he journeyed and sadly reflected,
"How can I face Avadh where now I'm expected?

"If one sees this chariot and Rama not in it,
"He'll shame me with questioning looks from that minute.

DOHA 141

"When the people of Avadh distressed, seeing me
"Here alone, with their questions come running,
"I must harden my heart and make truthful replies,
"For the truth there is no chance of shunning.

CHAUPAI 146

"O God, when the queens in distressful dismay,
"Of the three exiles question me, what can I say?

"If of Lakshman his mother should ask, seeking ease,
"What good news can I give her to comfort and please?

"When Kausalya comes running on Rama's behalf,
"Thinking of him in love as a cow of her calf,

"Can I say, when she asks how and where is her son,
"To the woods Rama, Sita and Lakshman have gone?

"When one asks of them, that's the reply I must give!
"Such the happy life I now in Avadh must live!

"When the king questions me, he whose life is bound up
"In his son, and I see him drink grief's bitter cup,

"Can I say without shame, as I look in his face,
" 'In the woods I've left them and returned to this place?'

"If he hears of his children this news, as he must,
"He'll depart from this body as mere straw and dust.

DOHA 142

"When the water goes, clay dries and cracks; since my heart,
"Rama gone, did not burst on the spot,
"It would seem that a pain-bearing, undying body
"God gave to me here as my lot."

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CHAUPAI 147

On he went, his heart echoing this mournful tune,
And arrived at the Tamasa's banks very soon;

Here with thanks to their homes he his boatmen-guides sent,
Who with rev'rent farewell, but distressed, homeward went.

As he came near the city, deep shame his heart filled,
As tho' Brahmans, or teachers, or cows he had killed;

Sitting under a tree, the full day he there passed;
Opportunity called him when night fell at last;

So he entered the city when darkness could hide,
And went into the palace, the chariot outside.

Some folks, getting the news that a chariot had come,
Flocked to see at the door of their king's royal home;

Seeing horses distressed, chariot too recognising,
They shrank and grew faint as does hail at sun-rising;

The citizens gathered were like fish dismayed,
When the water dries up in the pond where they played.

RETURN OF SUMANT TO AVADH

DOHA 143

The queens heard that Sumant had returned, but alone;
At the news they were all agitated;
The palace seemed to them a terrible place,
Like a chamber of ghosts and ill-fated.

CHAUPAI 148

The queens, putting questions, were all deeply pained;
But his voice would not come and no answer they gained;

Wholly deaf were his ears and his eyes wholly blind;
Only one thing he said—"Where shall I the king find?"

The maids saw his grief, as his senses forsook him,
And quickly to Kausalya's chambers they took him.

The minister saw there the king in such state,
As the dull faded moon when its glories abate;

He had shunned food and sleep, not a jewel was found,
But, unspeakably wretched, he lay on the ground;

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As he lay, from him sounded continual sighs,
Like Yayati who fell from his throne in the skies;¶
Ev'ry moment he groaned from intol'rable things,
Like the sun-seeking eagle that fell with burnt wings.
None can tell the king's suff'ring; the pain never ceased,
But each moment, with Rama away, it increased;
"Rama! Rama! Dear Rama!" he constantly cried,
Sometimes Lakshman's and Sita's names calling beside.

DOHA 144

Sumant gave to his master his greeting, "O king,
"Be victori'us!" as to him he bowed;
At his voice the king quickly sprang up, asked "Where's Rama?"
And worried anxiety showed.

CHAUPAI 149

To his bosom the king then his minister clasped,
Like a drowning man who at his last hope has grasped;
Down beside him the minister sat as desired;
Then the king, his eyes tear-filled, of Rama enquired:

"Where are Raghunath, Lakshman and Sita, my friend?
"How is Rama? The whole story tell to the end;
"Have they gone to the forest, or come back with you?"
At these words Sumant broke into weeping anew.
"What of Rama and Sita and Lakshman?" once more
Asked the king, with the worry and pain shown before.
All the beauty and virtue and worth men could find
In his Rama, the king with these thoughts called to mind:
"To the woods he was sent, tho' I promised the throne;
"As he heard, nor exulting nor sorrow was shown;
"I still live, tho' of such a son wholly bereft;
"In this world none my equal in evil are left.

¶ Becoming boastful, he lost the merit that had gained him his place.

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DOHA 145

"To where Rama and Sita and Lakshman are living,
"I pray, take me quickly, my friend;
"If you do not, I tell you the truth, my own life
"Will come swiftly and soon to its end."

CHAUPAI 150

More than once on the minister thus the king pressed:
"Give me news of my sons," was his loving request;
"Quickly think up some plan, friend, and show it to me,
"By which I Rama, Lakshman and Sita may see."
Then the Minister patiently, meekly replied:
"My good lord, in you wisdom and learning reside;
"You are patient and brave, god-like burdens you bear;
"In the gath'rings of saints you give always and share;
"Birth and death, all the sorrows and joys that we know,
"Loss and gain, friends who come and who go here below,
"To time and to fate, my lord, all are subjected,
"As night follows day they must all be expected;
"One happy in ease, sad in suff'ring's a fool;
"But the wise is in all calm, courageous and cool;
"From wisdom and thoughtfulness fresh courage borrow,
"For good all look to you, so give up your sorrow.

RETURN OF SUMANT TO AVADH

DOHA 146

"Their first halt they made at the Tamasa, next
"On the sacred and fair Ganges' bank;
"There the princes and Sita all bathed in the river,
"And of its pure waters they drank.

CHAUPAI 151

"Great the service and honour the boatmen there paid,
"As near Sringavera village that night they stayed.
"In the morning they asked for some milk from the fig,
"And their hair fastened up in crowns matted and big.

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"Rama then of his boatman friend asked for a boat,
"And with Sita embarking, they sat there afloat;

"Lakshman also, with arrows and bow in his hand,
"Entered into the boat at his brother's command.

"Then on seeing me worried and sad, Raghubir
"In his voice kind and patient spoke words of good cheer,

" 'My good friend, pay for me at my dear father's feet
" 'All respect, and upon me his blessing entreat;

" 'Then again at his feet offer for me this pray'r,
" 'Do not worry for me, sir, nor yield to despair;

" 'To us life in the forest much blessing will bring,
" 'And for you it means kind gracious merit, O king.

CHHAND 6

" 'By your kindness and grace, To this beautiful place
" 'We have come and shall blessing obtain;
" 'Then your word well fulfilled, Fears and worries all stilled,
" 'We will come back and see you again.'

"On the queen-mothers call, At their feet for me fall,
"Give them comfort and make this petition,
" 'Be it aye your endeavour, that happily ever
" 'The king sustain kingly position.'

SORATHA 5

"Again with respect the feet touch
"Of my teacher and make this plea on my behalf,
" 'Let your counsel and guidance be such,
" 'That the king may not worry for me in the least.'

CHAUPAI 152

"Pay to fam'ly and townfolk love's courte'us behest
"And then on my behalf, my friend, make this request:

" 'My well-being by all those as friends is assured,
" 'Who uphold here in comfort and peace Avadh's lord.'

"When Bharat returns give this earnest injunction,
" 'In justice and truth discharge your kingly function;

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"'Strive always your people to guard and preserve,
"'And as one all the queen-mothers faithfully serve;
"'As my brother a true brother's duties sustain,
"'For our friends and our parents our service maintain;
"'But especially, brother, watch over the king,
"'That no worried regrets my loss to him may bring.'
"Something angry and hot at this point Lakshman said;
"Rama checked him and then with me earnestly pled,
"The thing Lakshman childishly said I'll not tell you;
"I promised him that, with my oath's added value.

DOHA 147

"Sita too with her courtesies wished to say more,
"But was wholly by love overcome;
"With her rising emotion her body was trembling,
"Eyes tear-filled, voice falt'ring and dumb.

CHAUPAI 153

DEATH OF KING DASRATH

"Rama said, 'We are ready to set out once more,'
"And the boatman then rowed to the opposite shore.
"Thus the glory of Raghu's line went on his way;
"With a heart as of stone I stood watching that day.
"I can't tell all my anguish, however I strive,
"But somehow with this news I have come back alive."
Here the minister stopped, further utterance crushed,
As the thoughts of their fearful loss over him rushed.
The king, having listened as Sumant had spoken,
Now fell to the ground and lay there, his heart broken;
From mind so distracted and tortured, his body
There writhed like a fish caught in water that's muddy.
The queens showed their grief in loud sobbing and cries,
(All this trouble my pow'rs of description defies).
At the sound of their mourning Pain even was pained,
In Endurance no pow'r of endurance remained.

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DOHA 148

Hearing cries in the palace, the people of Avadh
With loud wailing noise the air rent;
As at night, if a thunderbolt crashed, a whole forest
Of birds to loud calls would give vent.

CHAUPAI 154

In his throat the king's breath gurgled, held up and caught,
Like a snake that in vain its lost jewel has sought;

Confused were his senses, all listless and jaded,
Like lilies that robbed of their water have faded.

Kausalya could see the king's mis'rable fretting;
The sun of the Solar-race seemed at its setting;

As mother of Rama, with naught of evasion,
She spoke words of courage to meet the occasion:

"My lord, think of this 'mid your grief and emotion,
"The absence of Rama's a deep and wide ocean,

"The ship—fourteen years limit, you at the helm,
"And its passengers all the dear folks of this realm;

"With due courage and patience you'll get us across,
"But without it we'll drown, there will be total loss;

"If to heart you will take, my dear husband, my plea,
"Rama, Sita and Lakshman once more we shall see."

DOHA 149

The king opened his eyes and looked up, as the queen
Spoke these soft loving words to her lord;
But he writhed like a poor helpless fish on the land
When upon it cold water is poured.

CHAUPAI 155

To arise and sit up then the king bravely tried,
Saying "Sumant, where now does good Rama abide?

"Where are Lakshman and Rama, dear to me each one,
"And Vaidehi the wife belov'd of my own son?"

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For Dasrath, each moment in misery spending,
The night seemed an age and that age seemed unending.
The curse of the blind hermit now came to mind;¶
He told Kausalya all, but relief could not find.
As he told it, he groaned at the loss thus decreed,
"Without Rama," he said, "life is cursed indeed;
"No use now is this body for things I had willed,
"Since love's promise made by it cannot be fulfilled;
"My life's love and hope, Rama, clung round about you,
"Already too long have I lived now without you;
"Lakshman, Sita, Rama! Alas, belov'd three!
"As the rain cloud to thirsty birds were you to me."

DOHA 150

"Rama! Rama! O Rama! My Rama!" again
And again the king cried as he grieved;
Then in anguish he quitted the body and died,
And a home in the heavens received.

DEATH OF KING DASRATH

CHAUPAI 156

In his life and his death Dasrath reaped rich reward;
Spotless glory from him down the ages has poured;
Rama's bright face he saw while he drew living breath;
Dying by Rama's loss he o'ercame even death.
The queens could not their sorrowful crying withhold,
As his beauty and virtue and glory they told;
They cried and lamented, their sorrow thus showing,
And time and again to the earth themselves throwing.
From men- and maid-servants loud crying arose;
In each home people wept in grief's bitterest throes:

¶ Growse tells this incident given in the old Sanskrit original: As a youth Dasrath unwittingly killed the son of a blind hermit and was told he too would die of grief from loss of a son.

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"Here today has the Sun of the Solar-Race set,
"He in whom chiefest virtues and graces all met."

They all railed at Kaikeyi's foul deed as they sobbed:
"The whole world of its eyes and their light she has robbed."

Thus in grief and lamenting the whole night they passed;
Then the sages and priests came as day broke at last.

DOHA 151

Saint Vashishth told them many a story from hist'ry,
Their need of such comfort discerning;
The grief of them all he was able to check
By his sympathy, wisdom and learning.

CHAUPAI 157

Dasrath's body he placed in a boat filled with oil,
And then messengers called who were trusty and loyal:

"Go to Bharat," he said, "With all possible haste;
"Tell no one what has happened, and time do not waste;

"Give to Bharat this one word—to him and no other—
" 'The master has sent, sir, for you and your brother.' "

Receiving this word, they set out on their course,
With a speed that would outpace the swiftest race-horse.

From the time that these troubles in Avadh began,
Evil omens on Bharat's calm mind set their ban;

At night fearful dreams on his slumbers were breaking,
And worried thoughts stayed from the moment of waking.

He gave many gifts, many Brahmans he fed,
And anointing the emblem of Siva, he prayed;

Of the god there he asked warm devotion's reward,
That his parents, his brothers and friends he would guard.

DOHA 152

While Prince Bharat was fretting and worrying thus
In his heart, the two messengers came;
Off he started on hearing his teacher's command,
With a pray'r to Ganesh in his name.

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CHAUPAI 158

Off he went, driving horses as swift as the wind,
Leaving rivers, rocks, mountains and woods all behind;
In worried anxiety nothing could please him
But flying to Avadh, that only could ease him,
Each moment seemed to him no less than a year;
With his haste to the city at last he drew near.
Many evil signs met him on ent'ring the town;
As he heard them and saw them his spirits went down;
He heard caws ill-omened from crows in ill places,
Heard donkeys and jackals, and saw their grim faces;
From streams, lakes and gardens their beauty seemed shorn,
While the city seemed fearsome and wholly forlorn;
The animals all seemed sad objects of pity,
The loss of their lord a disease thro' the city;
The citizens all looked so doleful and sad,
As tho' missing great treasures and joys they once had.

BHARAT RETURNS

DOHA 153

Not a word said the people who met him; they bowed
And passed on as tho' under a spell;
He himself, in the fear and distress of his mind,
Could not ask of them, "Friends, is all well?"

CHAUPAI 159

From streets and bazaars eyes that looked were averted;
The city seemed swept by a fire and deserted.
Kaikeyi, the curse of the Sun-Race, soon learned
And rejoiced that her son, Bharat, now had returned;
She arose, lamps of welcome she lit, then with pride
To the door ran to meet him and led him inside.
The whole fam'ly to Bharat seemed stricken and tossed,
Like a fine bed of lotuses smitten by frost;

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Kaikeyi among them alone seemed delighted,
A hill-woman who in the woods fire has lighted.

But seeing that Bharat was anxious and worried,
"Are all my folks happy?" she hastily queried;

He gave her his word that with them all was well;
Of his own fam'ly's state he then asked her to tell:

"The king, where is he? Where are all the queen-mothers?
"And Sita? And Rama and Lakshman, my brothers?"

DOHA 154

These words of her son she heard, full of his love,
And her eyes filled with make-believe tears;
She gave him her answer in words sharp as arrows,
That pierced to his heart thro' his ears:

CHAUPAI 160

"My son, I had everything, happily planned;
"With poor Manthara's help it all seemed well in hand;

"My plan now midway and in part may miscarry;
"The king's gone to heav'n, he could no longer tarry."

At this sad news Bharat was greatly dismayed,
As an elephant when lions roar is afraid.

"Alas, father! O father!" he cried, deeply grieved,
And fell down to the ground in distress unrelieved;

"To see you when dying I was not permitted,
"Nor was I to Rama by your hand committed."

Then rising and patiently struggling for breath,
He said, "Tell me now, mother, what caused father's death."

Kaikeyi, to Bharat's enquiry replying,
Was like one to open wounds poison applying;

The thing she had done she told from the beginning;
Harsh mind and perverse, finding joy in her sinning.

DOHA 155

When Bharat heard Rama was sent to the forest,
The death of the king he forgot;

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And believing that he was the cause, he stood speechless
And rooted like rock to the spot.

CHAUPAI 161

Queen Kaikeyi her son tried to comfort and turn
From his grief, but 'twas like putting salt on a burn:

"The king, my dear son, does not merit our sorrow;
"The glory he's won only good deeds can borrow;

"To him in this life virtue's fruits were all given,
"And now at the end he has gone straight to heaven;

"These things take to heart; do not be so appalled;
"Take the throne with your council, to which you are called."

Bharat trembled and shrank as this burnt to his soul,
Like a fest'ring sore touched with a hot burning coal;

Then he rallied his heart, deeply sighing, and said,
"Evil one, our house thro' you is ruined and dead;

"If by evil wishes you thus would betray me,
"Why did you not when I was born at once slay me?

BHARAT RETURNS

"You fell the tree, water the boughs—will it thrive?
"Do we drain away water to keep fish alive?

DOHA 156

"Rama, Lakshman my brothers! King Dasrath my father!
"And in the Sun-Race was I born!
"But with you as my mother, what now can I do?
"Divine Fate holds us both up to scorn!

CHAUPAI 162

"Oh, why did not your evil heart shatter and break,
"When beginning these plans, wretched woman, to make?

Why no pain when you stated your boons and their terms?
"Why was not your tongue burnt, your mouth eaten by worms?

"Oh, how could my poor father place in you such trust?
"God had robbed him of sense, doomed him then to death's dust.

"The Lord cannot fathom the heart of a woman,
"A mine of deceit, crime and all that's inhuman;

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"Then how could the king understand, when his mind
"Was devoted to truth, sincere, trustful and kind?
"Among all living creatures not one could be found
"That to Rama as dearer than life is not bound;
"No one thought him an enemy but you alone;
"Then what are you, if only the truth could be known?
"But whatever you are, you have sullied our name!
"Leave me! Out of my sight! Live apart in your shame!

DOHA 157

"Ah! That I should be born of one hostile to Rama!
"Oh, why should the Lord thus ordain?
"It must mean that of all men most sinful am I;
"But to speak thus to you is in vain."

CHAUPAI 163

When he heard of this deed of Kaikeyi so foul,
In his anger Shatrughna lost all self-control;
At that moment the hunchback hand-maiden arrived,
In a splendour by clothing and jewels contrived;
So when Lakshman's twin brother saw her there, his ire
Flamed afresh, as when butter is cast into fire;
Springing fiercely, he kicked her so hard on the hump
That she shrieked and fell down with a terrible bump;
Her forehead burst open, her hump broke and smashed,
All her teeth were knocked out, from her mouth her blood splashed;
"O my God," she cried, "have I this treatment deserved,
"Ill reward from those whom I've so faithfully served?"
She seemed so vile and hateful, prone there on the ground,
That the lad seized her hair-knot and dragged her around;
She was rescued by Bharat, the good, from her doom;
Then the lads went together to Kausalya's room.

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DOHA 158

With her clothes all dishevelled and soiled, and her body
All wasted, in bitter grief tossed,
There she seemed like a beautiful vine, or a bed
Of gold lotuses, smitten by frost.

CHAUPAI 164

Seeing Bharat, she rose, quickly to him she went,
But turned giddy and fell to the ground in a faint.

Distress Bharat showed, when he saw her condition,
And fell at her feet in his anxious contrition;

"Where are Sita, Rama and Lakshman?" he sobbed;
"Where is father? Of him also must I be robbed?

"Why was Kaikeyi given life here on this earth?
"Why, when born, was she suffered to bring aught to birth?

"She bore me to become a foul blot on our race,
"To our dearest a foe, and a worthless disgrace;

BHARAT RETURNS

"None like me is so wretched and cursed in this world,
"Since by me to these depths of despair were you hurled;

"My father's in heav'n, to the woods Rama's banished;
"Alone I'm the cause that these dear ones have vanished;

"Accurst! I'm a fire in a forest of cane,
"Of all torments the worst, an unbearable bane."

DOHA 159

At these kind words of Bharat, Kausalya arose
And, controlling her own grief and fears,
She lifted him up, to her bosom she clasped him
And with her own hand wiped his tears.

CHAUPAI 165

To her heart the sincere, kindly queen Bharat pressed,
As tho' Rama were back and were held at her breast;

She embraced Shatrughna and her heart overflowed
With the sorrow and love that sincerely she showed,

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All the people who saw her thus said with respect,
"From the mother of Rama that's what we expect."

As his mother she set Bharat then at her side,
And to him gently said, her own tears having dried,

"Now, my son, times are evil; be patient and brave;
"Both yourself and your realm from distress you must save;

"Take no further account of your trouble and loss;
"Time and fate in their course none can alter or cross;

"Let no blame, my son, for this to any be giv'n;
"It is God, He alone, who against me has striv'n;

"If He keeps me alive in this sad troubled state,
"Who can say what's ahead, what things now for me wait?

DOHA 160

"At his father's command Rama shed princely jewels
"And clothes, nor against him presumed;
"With no sorrow or pleasure, but calm in his mind,
"He the hermit's bark clothing assumed.

CHAUPAI 166

"Glad and willing, by passion and anger unmoved,
"To us all in our trouble a comfort he proved.

"When she heard he must go, Sita went with him too;
"Love forbade her to stay; love will see her right thro'.

"Lakshman too, when he heard, to go with them resolved,
"Altho' Rama to stay him great réasons evolved.

"At the last, to us all in farewell Rama bowed,
"And with Sita and Lakshman set off on his road.

"So these dear ones have gone to the wood, but, alas!
"With them I did not go, nor my soul with them pass;

"Here I, with my own eyes, have beheld all these things,
"And yet to this poor body my wretched life clings;

"I am shameless, I know, in my love as no other,
"With Rama as son and myself as his mother!

"The king knew the time—when to live, when to die;
"But an adamant, thunderbolt heart, son, have I."

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DOHA 161

As Kausalya said this, all those in the queen's quarters,
With Bharat their deep distress showed;
The whole palace seemed now given up to its wailing,
And turned into sorrow's abode.

CHAUPAI 167

As Shatrughna and Bharat both bitterly cried,
Queen Kausalya drew both of them close to her side;

She tried hard with wise words and in different ways
To encourage the lads and their spirits to raise.

Bharat too tried to comfort the queens on his part,
With some stories from scripture stored up in his heart;

Then in clearest of tones and with candour unfeigned,
In these things himself guiltless he humbly maintained;

"Striking parents or teachers is sin, we have learned;
"So when Brahmans' abodes or their cow-sheds are burned;

"It is sin when a child or a woman is killed;
"When with poison a monarch's or friend's cup is filled;

"Sins of thought, word and deed such as these, at all times
"Poets tell of—all foul and despicable crimes;

"May the guilt of them all, mother, on me be laid,
"If these foul plots and plans were with my consent made!

DOHA 162

"From the feet of God turning, some give their vile worship
"To devils—a dark, dreadful state;
"To the things we now suffer if I gave consent,
"May God visit me too with their fate;

CHAUPAI 168

"Some of scripture and righteousness make merchandise;
"Some of other men's sins stories spread or devise;

"Some are false, perverse, bad-tempered, lovers of strife,
"Foes of scripture and man all the days of their life;

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"Some are lecherous, treacherous, greedy of wealth,
"Robbing others of riches or wife by their stealth;

"Many I come to their fate, tho' 'tis fearful indeed,
"If to things that have happened here I have agreed!

"There are some who the ways of the godly oppose,
"Of all virtue and righteousness deadliest foes,

"Who do not honour Rama, tho' sharing man's ways,
"Who will never to Vishnu and Siva give praise,

"Who to walk after evil the scripture paths leave,
"Who assume holy guise, while the world they deceive;

"May the Lord make me one in their sin and their lot,
"If I, mother, have known of or shared in this plot!"¶

DOHA 163

The queen, as she heard Bharat's words which he spoke
From a heart that was true and sincere,
Made reply, "You in every thought, word and deed
"Are to Rama, my son, ever dear.

CHAUPAI 169

"To you than your very own life Rama's dearer,
"And you than his own soul to Rama are nearer.

"The moon might drop poison, or fire rain down snow;
"Water creatures aversion to water might show;

"The learned might be slaves to folly forever;
"But you could not be Rama's foe, Bharat! Never!

"To say you approve this if any should dare,
"He can never in heavenly joy hope to share."

¶ (Here Growse has the following as Chhand 6, not included in the copies of the Rama-Charita-Manasa which I have with me:
"Hearken, mother; in all my thoughts, words and deeds I am the slave "of the All-Merciful. The omniscient Rama dwells in my heart and dis- "cerns perfectly between true affection and feigned." As he thus spoke, his eyes streamed with tears, his body quivered, and his toes drew lines upon the ground. Again his mother took and clasped him to her bosom, knowing him to be indeed a votary of Rama's.)

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As she said this, the lad she again to her pressed,
While her eyes filled with tears and milk dropped from her breast.

Thus with many a sorrowing word and lament,
As they sat there together, the long night they spent.

Vamadev and Vashishth, saintly sages, then came;
Called the ministers, nobles and men of good fame;

Words of comfort and counsel to Bharat they gave,
Showing how and for what ends he now should behave:

DOHA 164

"Show your courage, my son! Play the man with good heart!
"Do the things that occasion demands."
At these words he arose; and as son of the king
For the fun'ral rites gave his commands.

CHAUPAI 170

As the scripture directs, the king's body was bathed;
On a beautiful car it was then laid enswathed.

The queen-mothers Bharat implored not to perish,
But hopes of again seeing Rama to cherish,

DASRATH'S CREMATION

Great Sandal-wood piles were with aloes collected,
And sweet-scented spices with care were selected;

They built a great pyre on the fair Sarju's bank,
Like a ladder to heaven, rank high upon rank;

All the cremating rites were performed as decreed;
Bharat bathed and presented the sesame seed;

As scripture demands, with its precepts repeated,
Ten rice balls were offered, and all was completed;

Whatever was called for by priest or by sage,
Was performed with all powers that love could engage.

Great gifts Bharat gave, and completed his cleansing,
Fine animals, cars and such freely dispensing;

DOHA 165

He gave many thrones, jewels, garments and houses,
Much money, much land and much grain;

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Ev'ry wish of the Brahmans was met, for he gave
That no wish and no need should remain.

CHAUPAI 171

Of the things Bharat did for his dear father's sake,
Full account one could not with a thousand tongues make,

The sages again on a day they deemed fitting,
Called nobles and council once more for their sitting;

When each one had taken his place in the hall,
Eager messengers went the two brothers to call.

When Bharat was seated, Vashishth, sitting near him,
With words of good counsel and truth tried to cheer him;

The story he told of Kaikeyi's ill-doing,
And other events upon that then ensuing;

He told how the king truth and honour upheld,
And in dying for love living hopes had excelled;

He told with eyes tear-filled and thrilled with emotion,
Of Rama's true virtue and loving devotion;

Of Lakshman's and Sita's affection he told,
As both sorrow and love laid upon him their hold.

DOHA 166

Then this wisest of saints sadly said, "Listen Bharat;
"Firm fate over ev'rything reigns;
"Loss and gain, death and life, shame and honour must come
"To all creatures as God's hand ordains.

CHAUPAI 172

"Considering this, you will see angry railing
"Or blame against any, must be unavailing;

"Consider this, too, with a calm, quiet spirit,
"That Dasrath your pity and grief does not merit.

"Be grieved for the Brahman who scripture ignores,
"And his duty, for all worldly pleasures and stores;

"Be grieved for the king who king's laws does not know;
"Loving self, for his people true love does not show;

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"Be grieved for the rich merchant, grabbing and greedy,
"With no love for Siva, for guests, or the needy;

"Be grieved for the lab'rer who Brahmans defames,
"Making boastfulness, pride, place and learning his aims;

"Be grieved for the wife to her husband untrue,
"Who bad-tempered, perverse, will her own way pursue;

"Be grieved for the student who sacred vows breaks,
"Who the teaching and will of his teacher forsakes.

DOHA 167

"Be grieved for the householder caught in delusion,
"From duty's plain pathway who turns;
"Be grieved for the ascetic who, leaving judgment
"And temp'rance, for false pleasures yearns.

CHAUPAI 173

"Be grieved for the hermit who, giving up pray'r
"And restraint, seeks a worldly life easy and fair;

"Be grieved for the backbiter, vainly enraged,
"Against parents, friends, teachers insanely engaged;

BHARAT'S GRIEF

"Be grieved much for one doing other men evil,
"But caring for self, heartless child of the devil;

"Be grieved much for one who will not give up ways
"Of deceit, nor give God his due service and praise.

"But the King of Kosala needs no grief or tears,
"He whose fame spreads thro' earthly and heavenly spheres;

"Such a king as your father there never has been,
"Is not now, nor in future days shall such be seen;

"All the gods and the guardians of heaven and earth
"Sing the praises of Dasrath, his virtue and worth;

"You may search ev'ry age, ev'ry realm, ev'ry clime,
"None can equal King Dasrath in fortune sublime!

DOHA 168

"Come now, tell me my son, in what terms and what manner
"Shall one like to Dasrath be praised?

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"One who Rama and Lakshman, Shatrughna and you
"Brought to birth and to manhood has raised?

CHAUPAI 174

"The good fortune and bliss of the king are complete;
"It is foolish and vain your laments to repeat!

"So give heed and in sorrow no longer presume;
"Heed your father's command and your kingdom assume,

"Since the king to your hands did his kingdom entrust,
" 'Tis a father's command and obey it you must.

"For the sake of his word the king Rama forsook;
"Gave his life when his son to the forest path took;

"That same word, which the king more than life counted dear,
"You, my son, to fulfilment must bring now and here;

"Bow your head at this time to your father's behest,
"In the end that will lead to the highest and best.

"Parsuram and his deed all men praise to this day,
"When his mother he slew, father's word to obey;

"To Yayati his son for old age exchanged youth;
"Such obedience is not shameful sin, says the truth.

DOHA 169

"Those who willingly heeded their father's command,
"Nor debated the right and the wrong,
"Have proved worthy of glory and bliss, and now share
"With immortals the heavenly song.

CHAUPAI 175

"You must earnestly try the king's word to fulfil;
"Grieve no more, to your people's good give heart and will;

"Thus the king will in heaven obtain peace of mind;
"You as blameless will virtue and honour here find.

"This is law, men and scriptures with one mind declare,
"He is crowned whom a father and king names as heir;

"Mourn no longer, but take up your kingdom and reign;
"Heed my word, for the greatest good thus you will gain;

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"This to Rama and Sita true comfort will bring,
"And no wise man will call it an unworthy thing.

"If your people are happy, Kauslaya also
"And the other queens happy days once more will know.

"Your own heart and its thoughts are to Rama well known,
"He your goodwill and loyalty therefore will own;

"When he comes back, the kingdom to him you can yield,
"And with love then assist him the sceptre to wield."

DOHA 170

All the ministers said with respect, "What your teacher
"Advises, you surely must do;
"Then, when Rama returns, let such changes be made
"As may seem right to him and to you."

CHAUPAI 176

Kausalya courageously added her word:
"From your teacher good counsel, my son, you have heard;

"For the good of all, humble obedience give;
"Heed the times and no longer in vain regret live;

BHARAT'S GRIEF

"Your dear father's in heav'n, Rama's gone to the wood,
"You yourself are perplexed and in hesitant mood;

"Upon you fam'ly, subjects and council depend;
"To their wishes and welfare now gladly attend.

"Seeing God is against us and times have gone wrong,
"As your mother I charge you, Rise up and be strong!

"What your teacher says, do! Nothing else, nothing less!
"Rule your people and scatter your fam'ly's distress."

His teacher's command and the council's approval,
Were incense to Bharat for sorrow's removal;

But hearing his mother's words, soft and sweet-toned,
All the pathos and pow'r of sincere love he owned.

CHHAND 7

These words warm and sincere, Falling on Bharat's ear,
Moved him deeply to great agitation;

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From his eyes waters fell, And his heart watered well
With its young shoots of fresh desolation.

All who saw his condition, His loving contrition,
Lost sense of themselves and their needs,
Praised the love they beheld, And said Bharat excelled
In the spirit of love and its deeds.

SORATHA 7

Then Bharat, faith's loyal defender,
With hands humbly clasped and with courage now rallied,
In words that were kindly and tender,
To all of his dear ones gave this worthy answer:

CHAUPAI 177

"My teacher has counselled me well and exhorted;
"By people and ministers is he supported;

"My mother has also her wishes declared;
"Such behests to heed truly must one be prepared;

"One should cheerfully do as the happiest task
"What one's teacher, or parents, master may ask;

"One their wish should not question as fit or unfitting;
"All virtue is lost, such a great sin committing.

"In what you have taught me great value is stored;
"If I heed it my welfare is always assured;

"I know I shall benefit much by such action;
"Yet in it I find not my heart's satisfaction;

"So now, I beseech you, give ear to my plea;
"Having heard, then again give your counsel to me;

"Forgive me and answer the pray'r that I offer;
"To right or wrong heedless, saints help those who suffer.

DOHA 171

"With father in heaven and Sita and Rama
"In exile, you ask me to take
"This great kingdom; do you for my own welfare ask me,
"Or for your own benefit's sake?

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CHAUPAI 178

"'Tis in serving Lord Rama my true welfare lies,
"But the sin of my mother robbed me of that prize.

"I have well searched again and again my own mind,
"But for happiness no other way do I find;

"Sita, Rama and Lakshman if I cannot see,
"Then the kingdom and throne mean but sorrow to me;

"Fine jewels are useless without any clothing,
"And vain without pray'r body-penance and loathing;

"All pleasures are useless to one who is ill;
"Lacking love for God, worship is more useless still;

"The body without life and soul has no beauty;
"Without Rama dull are my lot and my duty.

"To go then to Rama I pray you permit me;
"To good in no other way can you commit me;

"If for your own good you choose me in this hour
"As your king, love and folly have you in their pow'r.

DOHA 172

BHARAT'S GRIEF

"I am Kaikeyi's son, thus by nature perverse,
"Rama's foe and to shame total stranger;
"In hoping for blessing from me as your king,
"You are foolish, your future's in danger!

CHAUPAI 179

"I pray you believe me, 'tis truth that I speak;
"One devoted to truth as your king you should seek;

"But if still you persist and to me give the crown,
"Then the earth and this kingdom will come tumbling down.

"Among men I alone am most sinful and vile,
"For me Rama and Sita are doomed to exile.

"The king, when he to the woods Rama had banished,
"Himself left for heaven and from this earth vanished;

"But I, the foul cause of it all, make pretences,
"And sit here to listen possessed of my senses!

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"The palace is empty with Rama not here,
"But I stay in the place and endure the world's sneer!

"Tho' of Rama's dear presence my life is deprived,
"It still longs for the pleasures that monarchs have craved!

"Could I do any more my heart's hardness to show?
"Harder than Indra's thunderbolt is it, I trow!

DOHA 173

"But the blame is not mine; it is always the same;
"Harder is the result than the cause!
"From Dadhichi's bones thunderbolts came, and from stones
"We get iron—all by nature's laws.

CHAUPAI 180

"Since my soul to a body from Kaikeyi born
"Is attached, it is doomed to much suff'ring and scorn;

"If with Rama away, I still hold on to life,
"I shall hear and see much more of sorrow and strife.

"All the things that have happened Kaikeyi has done;
"'Tis for her Rama, Sita and Lakshman have gone;

"The king has thro' her reached the blessing of heaven;
"Herself widowhood and great shame has she given;

"While thro' her the people are suff'ring and troubled,
"For me with the throne ease and glory are doubled!

"But, tell me, what good will these things to me bring?
"And yet still you insist upon making me king!

"Since I came to this world born of Kaikeyi's womb,
"No foul deed is beyond me! Alas! That's my doom.

"Since my future by God has been thoroughly planned,
"Need my people and council now give helping hand?

DOHA 174

"Like one cursed by the stars, by a scorpion stung,
"And disease-stricken far beyond hope!
"Now to add to his troubles, you give him strong drink!
"With such treatment can any one cope?

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CHAUPAI 181

"All the things that the All-Wise Creator ordained,
"As befitting to Kaikeyi's son, I've obtained.

"But—son of King Dasrath and Rama's young brother—
"In vain were such honours giv'n, with such a mother.

"You all now are urging that I should be crowned,
"Saying all men seek kingship and hold it renowned;

"But what can I say to you, what answer make you?
"You speak without thinking, as fancy may take you.

"Would anyone say I had acted aright,
"Except my evil mother and I in this plight?

"To all creatures but me Sita-Rama are more
"Than their life; living, lifeless, their Lord they adore;

"But now others must suffer, while I am enriched;
"For that no one's to blame, but my days are bewitched.

"From your warm love for me anxious feelings arise;
"What you say seems to you the most fitting and wise.

BHARAT'S GRIEF

DOHA 175

"Rama's mother is thoroughly guileless and true,
"And for me her heart holds true affection;
" 'Tis nat'ral that she should so lovingly speak,
"When she sees me in utter dejection.

CHAUPAI 182

"In discernment our teacher we know is supreme;
"A mere plum in the hand to him all worlds must seem.

"As king of this realm he now plans to enthrone me;
"Since God is against me, their foe all must own me;

"All people will say this is Bharat's base plot;
"Only Sita and Rama will know it is not;

"I must hear that and go on as tho' 'tis enjoyed!
"Where there's water, there's mud! That I cannot avoid.

"I am not much concerned, tho' the world call me vile,
"Nor for winning to heaven in due after-while;

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"But I am greatly troubled and pained by one thing,
"That to Sita and Rama this suff'ring I bring.

"While for Sita and Rama all else Lakshman leaves,
"And the chief of life's fruitage and blessing receives,

"To the woods by my being here Rama is doomed,
"And I, luckless, this show of regret have assumed.

DOHA 176

"Before you I thus, with a full heart, declare
"All my deep bitter suff'ring and grief;
"And I tell you in earnest, until I see Rama
"Again, I shall find no relief.

CHAUPAI 183

"This one way I see for my mind's ease and healing;
"For Rama alone knows my heart and its feeling;

"There's only one wish at this time that I know;
"To the woods and to Rama at dawn I will go;

"Then, altho' I am sinful and sadly to blame,
"Tho' upon him and Sita by me trouble came,

"When he sees I have come and before him I fall,
"He will welcome me gladly and there forgive all.

"Lord Rama at heart is sincere and propitious,
"The home he of all that is loving and gracious;

"His bitterest foeman he never would harm;
"I'm his foll'wer and servant, tho' cause of alarm.

"So I pray, what is good for me, sirs, take to heart;
"With your blessing, tomorrow pray let me depart;

"By my pray'r his true servant will Rama discern,
"And once more to his home and his people return.

DOHA 177

"Altho' I'm as evil and guilty as birth
"From a mother so evil could make me,
"In Rama I place all my trust; as his own
"He will know me and never forsake me."

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CHAUPAI 184

His hearers by what Bharat said were elated,
By Rama's love-nectar afresh saturated;

Those drowned by their trouble in sorrow's deep well,
Were revived again as by a life-giving spell.

Ev'ry citizen, minister, teacher and queen
By their love were stirred deeply, and fresh hope was seen;

Many tributes they paid Bharat, this one above
All the rest: "You're the image of Rama's own love!

"It is not strange from you, Bharat, such things to hear,
"For we know, as your life, to you Rama is dear;

"If now any perverse, foolish, ignorant knaves
"Should blame you for the way Queen Kaikeyi behaves,

"May they, with generations unnumbered to come,
"Have for unnumbered ages in hell's depths their home!

"Tho' from snake's slime and guilt, the gem's worth is no less;
"It expels poison and relieves pain and distress.

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 178

" 'Tis good counsel you give; we'll all go to the woods
"And to Rama; new hope we have found;
"You have offered us help and support when we all
"In the sea of deep sorrow were drowned."

CHAUPAI 185

There was joy in all hearts and they voiced it aloud,
Like glad peacocks on hearing the thund'ring rain-cloud;

With one mind they decided to leave at day-break,
All aglow with their love and for dear Bharat's sake.

To Vashishth and to Bharat due rev'rence they paid,
Then with blessing their way homeward happily made.

They sang Bharat's praises in glad recognition
Of his loving, thoughtful, devout disposition;

They said, "He's done great things for us who were worried;"
And home, to get ready to leave, they all hurried.

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Each one told to stay back as house-warden, said
"That's as bad as tho' someone had cut off my head!

"You should make no one stay! Who would be a mere guard,
"When it means he thus loses life's richest reward?

DOHA 179

"Riches, houses and comforts, friends, father and mother
"And brothers—may all of them perish,
"If they keep us from Rama, and help us not to him;
"Whose love in our hearts we all cherish."

CHAUPAI 186

In each home, with rejoicing and nothing of sorrow,
They made all things ready to start on the morrow.

As Bharat went homeward, he pondered that night,
"All to Rama belongs, it is his now by right;

"The palace, the town, treasures, elephants, horses;
"If I leave them thoughtlessly to their own courses,

"It means I shall come in the end to disaster,
"And be chief of sinners, neglecting my master.

"A true servant renders his master his dues,
"Caring not how much others his ways may abuse."

With these thoughts, he called up servants trusty and tried,
Who at all times to duty would faithful abide;

Of his purpose and duty he told them at large,
And according to fitness gave each one his charge;

Having posted each servant with faithful intent,
Once again to the mother of Rama he went.

DOHA 180

Bharat, thoughtful and courte'us, the queens' love and suff'ring
Knew well, as again forth he fared;
So he asked that for them easy soft-seated chariots
And chairs should at once be prepared,

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Happy townsmen and women, like birds after night,
Were all eager to start with the first rays of light.

CHAUPAI 187

Bharat spent the night waking, and when morning broke,
Calling nobles and ministers, thus to them spoke:

"To the woods all that's needed for enthronement take;
"There Vashishth will crown Rama and him ruler make;

"Please, be quick!" Off they went and for these royal needs
Quickly made ready elephants, chariots and steeds.

First Vashishth and his wife in their car took their place,
Taking with them the things for the great sacrifice;

A big band of Brahmans, for saintliness hallowed,
Their leader in all kinds of vehicles followed;

The citizens also, all now eager-hearted,
Each in his conveyance, for Chitrakut started;

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

The queens were all seated in such lovely chairs,
That to tell of them fitly this poet despairs.

DOHA 181

Having made the town over to wardens and rev'rently
Setting the company going,
Bharat too, with his brother, set out, all his thoughts
Upon Rama and Sita bestowing.

CHAUPAI 188

To see Rama once more all the people were keen
As when tired thirsty elephants water have seen.

"Sita-Rama must walk in the forest today,"
With this thought the two brothers on foot made their way;

This loving example to all seemed so splendid,
That they too from beast or conveyance descended.

Kausalya near Bharat her palanquin stopped,
And this hint in tones tender and loving she dropped:

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"As your mother I ask you your chariot to mount,
"Of your poor friends and family taking account;

"Since you walk, they walk too; this allegiance is owed;
"But from weakness they're tired and not fit for this road."

Bharat heeded her words as a dutiful son;
In their chariot the two brothers sat and went on;

Thus they came to the Tamasa's bank the first day,
And the next on the Gomati's shore made their stay.

DOHA 182.

But once, and at night, they ate fruit and drank milk,
And the time then they quietly spent;
In their loyal devotion to Rama, all comfort
And luxury each one forewent.

CHAUPAI 189

On the Sai's banks resting, at daybreak once more
They set out and approached near to Sringaverpur.

When the ferrymen's chief of their coming got word,
In distress he considered the news he had heard;

"Why must Bharat go now to the woods? By the signs
"He is going, I think, with deceitful designs;

"If at heart he were not contemplating some wrong,
"Would he have all these people, this army, along?

"It may be that now Rama and Lakshman he'll kill;
"Then as king, with no hindrance, their places he'll fill;

"If so, then sound rule he ignores or opposes;
"To guilt and to danger himself he exposes;

"Tho' all gods and demons for war were uniting,
"They never could overcome Rama by fighting.

"That Bharat should act so gives me no surprise;
"From a poison vine's shoots heav'nly fruit does not rise."

DOHA 183

As he thought of these things, Guha said to his people,
"We all must be cautious and wary;

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"We'll sink all the boats, with their oars and their rudders,
"And so we will close up the ferry.

CHAUPAI 190

"Close the ferry at once! Then when Bharat arrives,
"All be ready to stop him, at cost of your lives!

"Take your weapons and fight him, nor heed any loss!
"Over Ganges alive we will not let him cross.

"Our gain? Death in war! On the banks of this river!
"Our frail body given for Rama the Giver!

"Of base birth are we, and our foe is a king!
"To us all such a death a bright future will bring!

"I'll fight for my master, in his cause endeavour,
"And win fame and glory in all worlds forever!

"If for Raghunath here my life I lay down
"I shall hold in both hands truest joys and renown.

"The man who with Rama's true friends is not counted,
"Or is not a saint having evil surmounted,

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

"Is simply a burden on earth, and in truth
"He's an axe to the tree of his own mother's youth!"

DOHA 184

Thus the chief of the boatmen his followers rallied,
Their courage in battle to show;
Then with thoughts upon Rama he called for his coat
Of fine mail and his quiver and bow.

CHAUPAI 191

"Hurry, brothers! Be ready to give me your aid!
"You have all heard my orders; let none be afraid!"

"It is well, master," said they all, raising loud cheers,
And encouraged each other; no time now for fears.

They saluted their chieftain and then hurried off—
Eager soldiers now—habits of boatmen to doff;

With their thoughts upon Lord Rama's feet, they all slung
On their shoulders their quivers, their bows they all strung;

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Axes, maces and spears were all quickly prepared;
Shields and helmets were donned—now the foe might be dared!

Some had swords; so expertly with these could they fight,
That in springing they seemed foes in heaven to smite.

Thus arming themselves in the way to them suited,
They came to Chief Guha and him they saluted;

His soldiers he saw well-equipped and expressed
His regard for each one; then his band he addressed:

DOHA 185

"Come, my brothers! Let none of you fail me today,
"As we face this great challenge and task!"
They indignantly answered him, "Never fear, master!
"We're ready to do all you ask.

CHAUPAI 192

"By your might and with Lord Rama's aid, all we can
"We will do; leave our foeman without horse or man!

"We will cover the earth with skulls, corpses and death;
"Not one foot will we yield or withdraw while we've breath!"

When the chief had inspected his warrior band,
"Sound the drums and go forward," he gave his command.

But, just then on the left in the ranks a man sneezed;
"That's a good omen," said the soothsayers, well-pleased;

But an elder considered the omen and said,
"Bharat's come, but don't fight him; no blood must be shed;

"To Lord Rama he's going, but why? To entreat him,
"Not fight him; the sign says, 'tis thus he will meet him."

Said Guha, "The words of the old man are wise;
"Fools act quickly, but meet with regretful surprise;

"We must first of all know Bharat's spirit and aim;
"Or we'll suffer, by fighting him, great loss and shame.

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DOHA 186

"Hold together, my men! Keep the ferry well guarded,
"While I go to see what this means;
"We will make our own plans when we know he's a friend,
"Foe, or neutral—know which way he leans.

CHAUPAI 193

"Bharat's heart by his temper will soon be revealed;
"Love and hatred can never for long be concealed."

With these words, he made ready a gift to present;
For the best roots and fruits, birds and beasts quickly sent;

Near-by fishermen brought to him many big fish
In great baskets, the finest, and all he could wish;

To meet Bharat he then with his present set out,
Seeing many good omens to scatter all doubt.

When he saw saint Vashishth from a distance, he made
His obeisance and told him his name and his trade;

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

The saint blessed him as one to Lord Rama endeared,
And told Bharat from him there was naught to be feared.

At this from his chariot Bharat dismounted,
And went to this man whom as friend Rama counted;

The chief told his village, his name and his birth,
And bowed low to the prince, his head touching the earth.

DOHA 187

As he made his respectful salute, Bharat raised him
And to him this humble friend strained;
'Twas as tho' he were meeting with Lakshman, the love
He felt for him could not be contained.

CHAUPAI 194

As for Guha the prince showed love eager and warm,
All the people praised highly his lovable charm;

"God be praised! God be praised!" rose in happy accord,
And the gods with their praise streams of flowers outpoured;

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They said, "By all laws he is base, and pollution
"He brings by his shadow; it calls for ablution;

"Yet him to his arms Rama's brother has taken;
"His touch thrills of love in the prince did awaken.

"Cry once, 'Rama! Rama!' Yes, even when yawning;
"Against you your countless sins then have no dawning;

"Since Rama this man in his arms has embraced,
"For his fam'ly and him is uncleanness erased.

"If into the pure Ganges a stream's water flows,
"It is honoured as holy—that ev'ryone knows;

"When Rama's name backwards Valmiki repeated,
"With Brahma he equal became, 'tis related.

DOHA 188

"A dog-eater, foreigner, fool, base-born churl,
"A wild jungle man, or one out-cast,
"By repeating the name of Lord Rama becomes
"World-renowned and all holy at last.

CHAUPAI 195

"It always has been so and is not surprising;
"There's uplift for any by Rama's upraising."

As thus the gods sang Rama's praise and great glory,
The people of Avadh rejoiced in the story.

By meeting with Rama's friend Bharat was fired
With new love; of his welfare and health he enquired.

As Bharat such honour and love on him showered,
The chief of the boatmen was all over-powered;

In love's glad confusion, himself he forgot
And stood gazing at Bharat, stock-still in one spot;

Then he rallied himself, at the prince's feet fell,
And hands folded began his deep feelings to tell:

"When I saw those fair feet lotus-like, fount of bliss,
"Then all joys and all kingdoms I seemed to possess;

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"But my lord's grace and favour much more have procured;
"Now for numberless ages this joy is secured.

DOHA 189

"When within my own mind, with my base birth and deeds
"My lord's glory and grace are compared,
"If I did not praise Rama, I surely should be
"By the world and its vile ways ensnared.

CHAUPAI 196

"I'm deceitful, a coward, low-minded, low-born;
"Laws of God and man ban me as worthy of scorn;
"But since Rama has found me and made me his own,
"I'm a glory to men, like a king on a throne."

Then Shatrughna embraced him, as he too beheld
How from Guha's heart humble affection upwelled.

Guha told the queen-mothers his name and avowed
For them also his homage, as lowly he bowed;

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

They all blessed him, as Lakshman, and said, "May you thrive,
"And may joy for ten million years keep you alive!"

All the citizens, seeing the boatman, rejoiced,
And as tho' they saw Lakshman, their happiness voiced:

"Here's a man who has won," they said, "life's greatest prize;
"Rama's brother embraced him before our own eyes."

The boatman his happiness showed as he guided
Them on, and himself to their goodwill confided.

DOHA 190

The boatmen the will of their chieftain soon learned
From his signals, and quick to obey;
Beneath trees, on the banks and in groves they put up
Resting places where these guests might stay.

CHAUPAI 197

When Prince Bharat saw Sringaverpur, ev'ry limb
Seemed to tremble and faint, as love swept over him;

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As he walked with the boatman, this beautiful pair
Seemed like Love and Humility incarnate there.

With his army thus Bharat the pure Ganges saw,
That can cleanse the whole world from each sin and each flaw;

When he bowed at the ford where Lord Rama had crossed,
As tho' seeing him now, in a trance he seemed lost.

When offering homage, Avadh's sons and daughters
Rejoiced as they looked upon these divine waters;

They bathed in the river and prayed the Creator,
"May our love for Rama's feet ever grow greater.

Said Bharat, "Fair Ganges, the sands on your shore
"Grant us bliss, like the Heavenly Cow, evermore;

"Humbly folding my hands, here I make this my plea,
"Love for Sita and Rama unchanging grant me."

DOHA 191

Having bathed in the river himself, of his master
Permission then Bharat requested;
Gave help to the queens in their bathing, then led them
To huts where that night they all rested.

CHAUPAI 198

To the huts of his people next, wherever found,
To see how they are fared, Bharat made his night's round.

Their service to Vashishth the brothers then rendered,
And next to Kausalya their help again tendered;

They honoured the queens as they kissed each one's feet,
Speaking to them in tones that were restful and sweet.

Bharat trusted the queens to Shatrughna and sent
For his new boatman friend, and together they went;

Hand in hand the two friends went off, faint with excess
Of their love, but from faintness their love was no less.

Bharat said, "My eyes burn with desire and are hot;
"It will give me relief when you show me the spot

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"Where that night Sita, Rama and Lakshman all slept."
As he said this, his eyes warm and loving tears wept.

When he heard Bharat's wishes, in loving response,
To that dear sacred spot Guha took him at once.

DOHA 192

To the beautiful *shisham* tree Guha led Bharat
Where Rama once lay down to rest;
There the prince offered worship with love and respect
For a place now so hallowed and blest.

CHAUPAI 199

At the sight he saluted the couch of soft grass,
And around it began in deep rev'rence to pass;

On his eyes from those foot-prints he placed the dear dust;
Tho' words failed, love burst from him, for show it he must;

He picked up sev'ral small shining spangles of gold,
On his head placed them, love thus for Sita he told;

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

With a heart that was aching and eyes filled with tears,
He told Guha his sorrows, his love and his fears:

"Torn from Sita, these spangles their brightness have lost;
"So the people of Avadh are troubled and tossed;

"Her father is Janak with whom no one measures,
"In whose hands are held the world's learning and pleasures;

"Her father-in-law Dasrath, Sun-like, and king
"Of the Sun-Race, whose praises high heaven must sing;

"And her husband is Rama, who all things ordains,
"By whose greatness a great man his greatness attains.

DOHA 193

"Here I gaze on the couch of that jewel of women,
"Of Sita, that wife so devoted;
"My heart does not break with its pain; it must be
"Hard as iron, from evil deep-rooted.

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CHAUPAI 200

"Lakshman, comely and young, he too needs loving care;
"As a brother there's none that with him can compare;

"His parents and people in warm love enfold him;
"Both Sita and Rama than life dearer hold him;

"Of well-refined sweetness his nature's composed;
"He was never to hot winds or hardships exposed;

"He—not I! (Ah! my heart in its hardness is worse
"Than great thunderbolts) shares the world's troubles and curse.

"And Rama, whose birth the whole world has enlightened,
"And all things with beauty and virtue has brightened;

"To people and family, parents and teacher
"He always gives happiness, such is his nature;

"His enemies render the praise that is due him;
"His courteous speech and ways draw all hearts to him;

"A myriad gods, each with myriad tongues,
"Could not tell all the praise that to Rama belongs.

DOHA 194

BHARAT'S
JOURNEY TO
CHITRAKUTA

"He is incarnate bliss and the fountain of joy;
"He's the gem of Raghu's royal line;
"Yet he slept on the earth on this grass; none the ways
"Of the Almighty Lord can divine.

CHAUPAI 201

"Pain never was mentioned where Rama could hear it;
"The king watched him well, that he never might fear it;

"The queen-mothers guarded him, too, day and night,
"As the snake guards its gem, or the lids eyes and sight.

"But on foot now and in the dense forest he walks;
"For his food he has but roots and fruits, leaves and stalks.

"The vile source of all ill is Kaikeyi accursed,
"Who for him who is dearest her hatred has nursed.

"Wholly wretched and cursed am I, evil's fount;
"All these troubles have come solely on my account;

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"A stain on our family name God created me;
"Foe to my master a bad mother fated me."

As he thus spoke, Guha lovingly pled,
"It is useless to pile all these things on your head;

"Dear is Rama to you; you to him are the same;
"All is due to preserve, cruel fate, none's to blame.

CHHAND 8

"Due to nothing but Fate, Is this sad sorry state;
"Thus the mind of your mother was turned;
"Rama, when here he stayed, Highest praise to you paid,
"And from him of your goodness I learned.

"Now I say, knowing both; Yes, I swear on my oath!
"None is dearer to him than yourself;
"You will surely exult, In the happy result;
"Be then patient in Rama's behalf.

SORATHA 8

"Lord Rama, all-seeing, all-knowing,
"Is kindly and loving and patient with all;
"Your trust upon him then bestowing,
"In confident quietness take now your rest."

CHAUPAI 202

At the words of his friend, Bharat's spirits arose,
And remembering Rama he went to repose.

When the citizens heard what had happened, they too
Went to see the dear spot, their hearts heavy with woe;

Their eyes streamed with hot tears as the place they approached,
And the unhappy deeds of blind fate they reproached;

They went round it, hands rev'rently clasped, and then paused;
At Kaikeyi they railed who these troubles had caused;

The devotion of Bharat some greatly extolled;
How the king had fulfilled love's demands others told;

The boatman they praised, but themselves they berated;
They all were distressed, overcome, agitated,

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They passed the whole night thus in deep wakeful sorrow,
They started their crossing as dawned a new morrow;

Vashishth in a beautiful boat was first seated,
Then all of the queens in one newly completed;

The whole of the party in four hours had crossed;
Bharat counted them then, to be sure none were lost.

DOHA 195

All his morning rites done, Bharat greeted with honour
His mothers and teacher belov'd;
Then, the boatmen ahead as their guides, the whole band
On their journey again forward moved.

CHAUPAI 203

Guha, chief of the boatmen, ahead of all went;
Then the queens in their chairs after him Bharat sent;

Then he placed his young brother in charge of that group;
And his teacher he sent with the large priestly troop.

Himself on the Ganges with reverence calling,
And Rama and Sita and Lakshman recalling,

On foot he set out once again on his course,
While behind, by its bridle now led, came his horse.

Faithful servants again and again to him cried,
"Mount your horse now, good master! Pray mount, sir, and ride!"

Bharat said, "While on foot Rama walks, I refuse;
"Horses, chariots, elephants, I will not use;

"If I walked on my head it would be better still!
"Servants' duties and places are hard ones to fill."

His words made the servants all saddened and worried,
Those seeing him meekly on foot and unhurried.

DOHA 196

When noon-tide was past, with his people Prince Bharat
Prayag, pure and sacred town, entered;
"O Sita! O Rama!" he cried, "Sita-Rama!"
His longing and love in them centered.

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CHAUPAI 204

As onward he walked, on his feet there were blisters
That glistened like dew-drops on lotus-bud clusters.

The people, on hearing that Bharat had walked
All that day in distress, of his humbleness talked.

The people first bathed at the three rivers' junction;
Then Bharat in rev'rence prepared for that function;

He bathed in those waters that give holy cleansing,
Munificent largess to Brahmans dispensing;

He gazed at the waves dark and light there before him,
And rev'rently said, as emotion swept o'er him,

"'Tis here that all blessings are given and sealed;
"Spot most sacred, in scripture your pow'r is revealed;

"King's duties forbid, yet I stand here a beggar;
"When pained, men do wrong; yes! to do it are eager;

"Well knowing this fact, all this world's noble givers
"Respond to the suppliant's pray'r, sainted rivers!

BHARAT'S JOURNEY TO CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 197

"Not treasure, or righteousness, pleasure, or freedom
"From birth—not for these do I plead;
"But whenever and wherever born, may my heart
"Love Lord Rama—this one boon I need.

CHAUPAI 205

"My folly may be known to Rama, my master;
"Men say I'm his foe and have brought him disaster;

"But give me in mercy this one thing I want;
"Love for Rama's and Sita's dear feet to me grant.

"Tho' the clouds fail their duty and instead of rain
"Pour down nothing but hail, and the birds call in vain;

"Tho' the birds disappointed their fruitless cries cease;
"May the love of my heart for Lord Rama increase;

"And as gold is refined when 'tis cast in the fire,
"May my love grow when flames of affliction rise high'r,"

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From the waters arose, like a soft gentle wave,
A sweet voice that this answer to Bharat there gave:

"My son Bharat, in all ways I know you sincere,
"That to Lord Rama's feet with true love you adhere;

"It is useless to harbour such grief in your mind;
"To Lord Rama none dearer than you could I find."

DOHA 198

As these kind gracious words from the rivers he heard,
Thro' and thro' with his joy Bharat thrilled;
While the gods rained down flowers and hailed him with praise,
Heav'n and earth with their glad cries were filled.

CHAUPAI 206

These things that had happened delighted beholders,
Prayag's pilgrims, students, monks, saints and householders;

They said, as they gathered in groups and discussed,
"True is Bharat in love, faithful too in his trust."

Hearing ev'rywhere men Rama's virtues proclaim,
To the home of saint Bharadvaj Bharat soon came.

BHARAT WITH BHARADVAJ

When the saint saw the prince, and to him Bharat bowed,
"Here comes living good fortune!" he cried out aloud;

He ran to the lad, raised and to his heart pressed him,
And wished him all good things in life as he blessed him;

He gave him a seat, but the lad, bowed and shrinking,
Seemed into the depths of deep shame to be sinking:

"He'll question me now, and be greatly incensed,"
Was his thought; the saint said, as the trouble he sensed,

"To me, Bharat, the things that have happened are known;
"'Tis God's doing and His work cannot be o'erthrown.

DOHA 199

"Understand what your mother did; let not your heart
"With its grief be so burdened and swollen;
"'Tis not Kaikeyi's fault, my son; by Sarasvati
"Your poor mother's good sense was stolen,

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CHAUPAI 207

"If still you are troubled, then wisdom replies,
"Law of scripture and man are upheld by the wise;

"The ages, my son, will proclaim your great glory,
"Both scripture and man be advanced by your story.

"By father bequeathed, the throne must be received
"By his son; 'tis a law known to all, and believed;

"The king on the throne, for his oath's sake, installed you;
"To truth, joy and fame with the kingdom he called you.

"To th' woods Rama's banished; that's truly a crime;
"The whole world at this news is distressed at this time;

"The queen was the cause, moved by fate and demented;
"She now of her folly and sin has repented;

"For this no blame rests upon you, not the least;
"Who blames you is a sinful and ignorant beast;

"To reign is no fault since your father conferred it,
"And Rama would greatly rejoice if he heard it.

BHARAT WITH BHARADVAJ

DOHA 200

"But what you are doing is what should be done,
"It is right and will bear happy fruit;
"True devotion to Rama—naught higher than this
"Is achieved; of all joy 'tis the root.

CHAUPAI 208

"This the breath of your life! This your unmeasured wealth!
"None can equal you now in good fortune and health;

" 'Tis not strange you are so, and such tributes have won;
"You are Rama's own brother and Dasrath's true son!

"Listen, Bharat! None ever such true love has showed,
"As on you always Lord Raghubir has bestowed;

"Lakshman, Rama and Sita—to all you are dear;
"All the time did they praise you, the night they were here;

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"When they bathed in this river, this secret I learned;
"They were lost in deep joy as their thoughts to you turned;
"By such warm, earnest love to you Rama is bound,
"As have fools for the joys that on earth may be found;
"In him 'tis no great virtue such love to cherish;
"His own and their dear ones he always will nourish;
"I know that for Rama, all others above,
"You are truly the essence of incarnate love.

DOHA 201

"The thing that seems wrong and reproachful to you,
"A new lesson to all of us teaches;
"In you and your love for Lord Rama, devotion
"Its highest and worthiest reaches.

CHAUPAI 209

"Your glory, a clear new moon, draws Rama's servant,
"As partridge or lotus, with love pure and fervent;
"It always is rising, its time never ceases;
"It wanes not on earth, day by day it increases;
"Like night-birds, all souls by its brightness are drawn,
"Never fading, e'en when Rama's sun has its dawn;
"To all it gives joy day and night as they follow;
"The queen's wrong, eclipse-like, this moon cannot swallow;
" 'Tis filled with the love of the Lord, as with nectar;
"No stains mar its face as the moon shows—grim spectre!
"Of this all may drink now and find satisfaction;
"For all 'tis made easy and nigh by your action.
"A king's long austerities gave us this river,¶
"Which, as we recall it, gives blessing forever;

¶ King Bhagirath, who brought the Ganges from heaven by 1,000 years of austerities; the chief stream of those which in Garhwal join to become the Ganges, is called the Bhagirathi.

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"But Dasrath's great virtues one never can tell;
"On this earth none can equal it, much less excel.

DOHA 202

"By this king's humble love we were given Lord Rama,
"Whose kindness none ever need forfeit;
"On whom Siva dwells with the eyes of his heart,
"Never weariness owning nor surfeit.

CHAUPAI 210

"This bright moon of your glory, here peerless it glows;
"Love for Rama alone is the form its face shows;

"My son, do not hold in your heart thoughts so tragic;
"No need to be poor with the stone that is magic!

"Come, Bharat, I tell you the truth and no lie;
"In the woods an ascetic and hermit am I;

"All my hopes and endeavours their fruit have obtained;
"Sight of Lakshman and Rama and Sita I've gained!

BHARAT WITH BHARADVAJ

"Of the fruit of that fruit, sight of you, now possessed,
"With Prayag, I am also amazingly blessed.

"Happy Bharat! By all men your name is extolled."
O'er the saint, as he paused, waves of warm feeling rolled.

At his words, all the people there gathered rejoiced;
As the gods rained down flowers, their praise the saints voiced:

"Glory! Hail!" from Prayag to heav'n rose their glad cries,
While Prince Bharat seemed lost in his happy surprise.

DOHA 203

With his thoughts upon Rama and Sita, the prince
To the saint and the people assembled,
Replied in a faltering voice, as his eyes
Filled with tears and his young body trembled:

CHAUPAI 211

"Truth suffices, and useless and wrong is an oath
"In a sacred place and among saints. Here are both!

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"If I say what is false in this place, at this time,
"It will be an atrocious, despicable crime;

"You know all things; by me truth must not be besmirched;
"By the Lord too all hearts are well-known and well searched.

"By the sin of my mother I am not disturbed;
"Nor lest by the world's slander my pleasure is curbed;

"Of the losing of heaven I am not afraid;
"By the death of my father I am not dismayed;

"The great fame of his goodness throughout the world runs,
"And both Lakshman and Rama he has as his sons;

"He left his frail body, for lost Rama yearning;
"In him and his death there is no cause for mourning.

"But Rama and Lakshman and Sita now wander
"Barefoot and in hermit's garb in the woods yonder.

DOHA 204

"They have put on deer-skins, eaten nothing but fruit,
"On grass mats they at night have reposed,
"Under trees must they live, to the suff'ring of cold
"And heat, wind and rain always exposed.

CHAUPAI 212

"In my breast I this burning hot anguish must keep;
"I've no hunger by day and at night cannot sleep;

"There's no remedy known for this dreaded disease;
"I have searched the whole world, but have nowhere found ease.

"My poor mother's bad mind, like a worker in wood,
"Cause of all these sad things, took an axe for my good;

"First a pillar of bad wood her infamy planned,
"Set it up then in Avadh when Rama she banned;

"Thus for me and my welfare that axe was employed,
"But the hope of the whole world is by it destroyed.

"All these troubles will vanish when Rama comes back
"To our town; till then comfort and cure we must lack."

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By what Bharat said, Bharadvaj was uplifted,
And all hearers praised one so noble and gifted.

The saint said, "My son, do not be so downcast;
"When once more you see Rama, all pain will be past."

DOHA 205

Then to comfort the prince, the great saint and his people

Said, "You are our very dear guest;
"So share with us the roots, herbs and fruits that we eat;
"Be content as we offer our best."

CHAUPAI 213

At this Bharat's mind was again sadly shaken;
It seemed at that time wrong that food should be taken;¶

But, heeding the voice of his reverend sponsor,
He bowed low before him and gave him this answer:

"To earnestly heed your command as my teacher,
"For me is religion's supreme vital feature."

BHARAT WITH BHARADVAJ

These words pleased the saint as both seemly and fervent;
He called his disciples and most trusted servant;

"We'll entertain Bharat," he said, "as we ought;
"Let our best roots and fruits and herbs quickly be brought."

"It soon shall be done, sir," said each and saluted,
Then went to the task gladly for which recruited.

But Bharadvaj said to himself, "Here is seated
"A noble guest who as a god should be treated."

At this magic fairies in person from heaven
Appeared, saying, "To us commands may be given."

DOHA 206

Said the now happy saint, "With his brother and people
"Prince Bharat has come, and they all

¶ Growse says, "not a time for feasting," but an Indian commentator says—wrong for a Kshatriya to eat with Brahmans in that sacred place.

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"Are distressed by Lord Rama's loss; courtesy show
"To relieve them; let peace on them fall."

CHAUPAI 214

The fairies responded, not one of them wavered,
But thought to themselves, "We are most highly favoured."

"No guest is more worthy," they said to each other,
"Than Bharat the prince, who is Rama's young brother."

They said to the saint, "Service ample and hearty
"We'll give to bring ease to the whole royal party."

They first of all such gorgeous houses erected,
That cars of the gods at the sight were dejected;

They filled them with goods which such comfort presented,
That even the gods their condition resented;

The men and maid servants, each one set apart,
Watched for service and gave it then with all their heart;

'Twas done in a moment, each doing his duty;
There never was seen—Not in heaven!—such beauty.

The people were first given their chance to choose
The rooms restful and beautiful which they might use.

DOHA 207

Then to Bharat and all the king's fam'ly the saint
Gave their quarters, whose splendour amazed
Even Brahma, the splendour that by holy rigour's
Great force, Bharadvaj had there raised.

CHAUPAI 215

Even Indra's great realms, of which Bharat had dreamed,
When compared with this force insignificant seemed.

To tell these things fitly I make no pretension;
The sight made wise hermits forget their abstention!

'Neath canopies lay finest clothes, beds and chairs;
In the gardens and groves birds and beasts played in pairs;

Scented flowers, fruits nectar-like, many a pool
And stream filled with pure water, refreshing and cool;

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Food and drink so divine, lavish; like those ascetic,
The folk seemed non-plussed—it was almost pathetic!

Each place had divine cows, divine trees above it;
The sight caused Lord Indra and Sachi to covet!

The season was spring, fresh sweet winds blew around,
And the chief things in life full and handy were found;

Perfumes, garlands, and women were there for their pleasure;
The people were glad and amazed at such treasure.

DOHA 208

Bharat's heart and these goods were as birds meant for sev'rance,¶
But caught by their hunter, the sage,
Who together had put for the night these unmatched ones,
Till dawn, in his hermit-home cage.

CHAUPAI 216

Bharat bathed in the river at dawn with his vows;
To the saint with his friends honour paid by deep bows;

BHARAT WITH BHARADVAJ

The saint's orders and blessings he gladly received,
And low bending his burden by pray'rs he relieved.

Then with guides as companions who knew well the road,
Resolutely away he to Chitrakut strode;

Rama's friend at his side, hand in hand, he began
To go on as tho' earnestness here became man;

With his head and feet bare, but without shams and shows,
To fulfil true love's promises onward he goes;

Of his three dearest ones and their journey enquires,
Which to many a story the boatman inspires.

When he came to the tree where dear Rama had lain,
All his heart's deep emotion he could not restrain;

At the sight the gods rained down their blooms from aloft,
And the road became easy, the ground became soft.

¶ The male and female quail keep apart at night; so Bharat's sad mind and these delights could only be put together by some outside power.

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DOHA 209

Refreshing soft breezes blew round, over head
Welcome clouds from the sun's fierce heat shaded;
Such comforts as Rama himself had not known,
On his way as he went Bharat aided.

CHAUPAI 217

Things living and those lacking all animation,
Who seeing Lord Rama had hopes of salvation,
At once seeing Bharat attained that high station,
Released from the curse of prolonged transmigration.

For Bharat such things were not strange or surprising,
With thoughts of him ever in Rama's heart rising.

The man who of Rama's name once mention makes,
Others too with himself to salvation's goal takes;

Further, Bharat to Rama was brother endeared,
Easy then must his way be, of all trials cleared;

So the sages and saints and ascetics declared,
And the joy that prevailed, seeing Bharat, they shared.

Seeing this, divine Indra said, thoughtful and glum,
"Good for good! Ill for bad men! To this have things come!"

So he said to his counseller, "Quickly, sir; act
"That the two brothers' meeting may not become fact.

DOHA 210

"Prince Bharat's a sea of love; Rama is loving
"And modest beyond all conception;
"The things we had planned may go wrong very soon;
"It is time for some scheme of deception."¶

CHAUPAI 218

Amused at these words was the god's great advisor,
To see Thousand-Eyes without sight and no wiser;

¶ Tulsi Das's picture of Indra is generally of one perverse, jealous and unideal; in Valmiki's Ramayana he is very different.

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He said to the god, "No deceiving! No tricks!
"They are vain, and will put you in yet a worse fix;
"Lord Rama himself is the lord of Illusion;
"Don't play with his servant; you'll land in confusion.
"I stopped his anointing; he wished me to do it;
"But if now we try deceit, surely we'll rue it!
"Know Indra, the temper of Rama is thus;
"If one sins against him, he will not frown or fuss;
"But sin against one of his saints is abhorrent
"To him; then his anger's a hot burning torrent;
"In scripture and hist'ry this fact is well-known;
"To Durvasa¶ and others like him was it shown.
"No one dearer to Rama than Bharat could be;
"'Rama! Rama!' say men, 'Bharat! Bharat!' says he.

DOHA 211

"Of harm to a servant of Rama you never
"Should think, Indra; such things forget;
"It brings sorrow in heaven, disgrace upon earth,
"Everlasting and daily regret.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

CHAUPAI 219

"What I say is true, Indra; I pray you give heed;
"To Lord Rama his servants are precious indeed!
"It is pleasure to him when his servants one serves;
"One who fights them, he fights, gives him what he deserves!
"Tho' to anger and passion he's neutral and cold;
"Tho' on him right and wrong, good and ill have no hold;
"Altho' deeds and their fruits over all by him reign;
"Altho' as he has done each the fruit must obtain;

¶ Durvasa was a Saivite noted for terrible curses; but once cursing a devout follower of Vishnu, he roused the god's anger and came to repent of his rashness.

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"Yet in differing forms and in varying ways,
"In the hearts of both friend and unfriendly he plays.

"Tho' unseen, without form, unconceited, unmoved,
"He has taken this form for those loving and loved;

"He the needs of his faithful ones meets 'gainst all odds;
"To this witness the scriptures, the saints and the gods.

"Know and heed this, and give up your foolish deceit;
"Humbly, lovingly bow yourself at Bharat's feet.

DOHA 212

"Wholly loyal to Rama, devoted to others,
"Kind sharer in ev'ryone's sorrow
"Is Bharat; from him, chief of Rama's beloved,
"No fear can come, none need you borrow.

CHAUPAI 220

"Devoted, for gods he seeks all things expedi'nt
"And good; ever, wholly to Rama obedi'nt.

"You're troubled by self, thoughts of others excluded;
"That's not Bharat's fault; you are sadly deluded."¶

At this from his teacher, the things that he feared
Faded from Indra's mind; heart and vision were cleared;

In joy, flow'ry rain upon Bharat he showered,
And praised him for gifts with which so richly dowered.

As Bharat went on in this true loving spirit,
The sages and saints warmly praised his great merit;

He called Rama's name with a low sighing sob;
All around streams and fountains of love seemed to throb;

As he spoke, stones and thunderbolts melted away;
And the love of his people—what more can one say?

Once he halted, and then to the Yamuna came;
As he saw it, tears flowed from his eyes in a stream.

¶ Growse makes the note here that no such talk is found in Valmiki's Sanskrit Ramayana; Tulsi Das puts it in for theological reasons.

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DOHA 213

To the prince and his people the hue of this river
Recalled Rama's dark form sublime;
In the sea of loss caught, Bharat into the boat
Of discretion was able to climb.

CHAUPAI 221

They halted that day on the Yamuna's shore,
Glad to find time for resting and comfort once more.

That night countless craft, of each type that can carry
On water, there gathered from each near-by ferry;

All crossed in one trip; Bharat's mind was relieved
By this service that thro' Rama's friend they received.

Having bathed in the river, the two brothers bowed,
And went on with the boatman-chief and their own crowd;

At the head went Vashishth in his fine restful car;
Next the long line of people came, stretching afar;

Then on foot came the two brothers after the rest,
In the simplest apparel and ornaments dressed;

With them servants, the minister's son and friends walked,
As of Lakshman and Sita and Rama they talked;

They rev'rently stopped and saluted the places
Where Rama had stayed, noting gladly all traces.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 214

The people who lived by the side of the road
Quickly ran, each one leaving his duty;
They found there life's richest reward and joy, seeing
The brothers' affection and beauty.

CHAUPAI 222

One woman soon said to another, "My dear,
"Is it Rama and Lakshman, or not, we see here?

"The same age and form and contrasted complexion,
"The same ways and manners and simple affection;

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"But Sita's not here, they are diff'rently clad,
"And they're plainly not happy, but troubled and sad;

"This great army goes with them, that too raises doubt;
"And all hope that it's Rama and Lakshman wipes out."

The words of this woman convinced all who heard her;
Unusu'lly clever and keen they declared her.

One woman who praised her, the truth then maintained
Of her words, and in sweet tones the matter explained;

She lovingly told them the whole of the story,
How Rama was robbed of his kingdom and glory;

She praised Bharat too for his fine disposition,
His virtue, his love and his blessed condition:

DOHA 215

"Fruit eating, and walking; the kingdom entrusted
"To him by his father he dares
"To give up; he goes now to bring back Raghubir;
"No one with young Prince Bharat compares.

CHAUPAI 223

"Just to hear or to tell of his brotherly love
"And devotion, all sorrow and sin will remove;

"Tho' we say all we can, he exceeds far our range;
"But he's Rama's own brother, so that is not strange;

"Seeing him with Shatrughna, our fortune is crowned;
"To our glory 'mongst men this will always redound!"

As they listened and watched there, with sorrowful scorn
They said, "Strange from such mother such son should be born!"

Said one, "This is no deed and no sin of the queen;
"But that God to us women most gracious has been;

"Who are we, in the scriptures and morals unversed;
"In the lowest of habits and families nursed;

"To have in this meanest of places this vision?
"From some former life it is virtue's provision."

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This wondering joy in each village was shown,
As tho' heaven's own tree in the desert had grown.

DOHA 216

At the vision of Bharat, the folks by the way
Had the happiest future assured;
As tho' into Prayag by good fate, with no effort,
The Ceylonese people had poured.

CHAUPAI 224

Hearing Rama's high praise with his own as he went,
All his thoughts on his brother alone Bharat bent;

When he came to a temple or such sacred place,
After bathing he tarried to worship a space;

In his heart, for one boon and that only he cried,
That for Rama and Sita his love might abide.

When he saw any hill-man or man of the wood,
Any student, ascetic, or monk on the road,

He saluted and asked the one thing in his mind,
"Lakshman, Rama and Sita where now may I find?"

They all gave to him gladly their news of the Lord;
And by seeing him there reaped life's richest reward;

Those who said they had seen them and of their health told,
Dear as Rama and Lakshman henceforward were held.

As Bharat thus courte'usly made his petition,
Of Rama he learned and his forest condition.

DOHA 217

They halted and rested at night, then with thoughts
Upon Rama again early started;
To see their dear Raghunath once more the people,
Like Bharat, were all eager-hearted.

CHAUPAI 225

Happy omens came oft to both people and prince;
In their eyes or their arms many glad throbbing hints;

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The joy of the people with Bharat's was blended;
"We'll meet Rama soon; trouble then will be ended!"

Each one his heart's longing and purpose divulged,
And unceasing in hopeful love's nectar indulged;

Feet unsteady, limbs numbed, they intoxicate seemed;
Voices trembled with love as they told what they dreamed.

Rama's friend, Guha, to them at last pointed out
That great gem among mountains, sublime Chitrakut,

Near which the Mandakini river was playing,
On whose banks the brothers with Sita were staying;

They rev'rently bowed as the mount they espied;
"Hail to Rama, the true life of Janki!" they cried.

At the sight, the whole party with love was o'erwhelmed,
As tho' Rama's return even now all fears calmed.

DOHA 218

The love Bharat showed at that time could not be
Fitly told by the most divine tongue;
'Tis for me like a selfish fool trying to tell
Of the joys that to heaven belong.

CHAUPAI 226

They were so overcome by his love, as they drank,
That they walked four miles more even when the sun sank;

On seeing a spot near to water, they halted,
And set out at dawn again, eager, exalted.

That same night the sleep of Lord Rama was broken;
A dream Sita told him from which she had woken:

"I saw Bharat come with the people, a fire
"And a fever within from the loss of his sire;

" 'Neath burdens of grief and distress they all faltered;
"The queen-mothers, all of them, seemed greatly altered."

His eyes, as he heard Sita's dream, filled with tears
From his grief—he who heals all man's sorrows and fears;

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Then to Lakshman he said, "Ill this means and not good;
"We shall hear something saddening, not what we would."

With his brother he bathed, then to Siva he prayed,
And due honours to saints and to deities paid.

CHHAND 9

To the gods having prayed, Honours due having paid,
Sitting quietly, northward he gazed;
Seeing dust in the air, birds and beasts ev'rywhere,
He returned, troubled now and amazed.

Both his brother and he, rose and looked out to see
What could cause this commotion and hurry;
Then foresters came, Kols and Kirats by name,
Who at once told the cause of this flurry.

SORATHA 9

At heart he rejoiced, body throbbing,
To hear the glad tidings the forest men brought him;
His eyes were tear-filled, not with sobbing
And grief, but with love as the dew fills the lotus.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

CHAUPAI 227

But then anxious thoughts for a time made him pause;
"They say Bharat is coming, but what is the cause?"

Another man came and said to him, excited,
"With Bharat a well-equipped force has been sighted."

This yet more perplexed him; he saw on one hand
Bharat's shyness, on th' other his father's command;

On the spirit of Bharat he dwelt in his mind,
But to answer his questions no sure ground could find;

At last one thought gave the assurance he needed,
"He's thoughtful and true; my word always he heeded."

But when Lakshman saw how his brother was puzzled,
"It's time to speak out," he thought, "not to be muzzled,"

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He said, "Tho' not asked for, I must say this much;
"Sometimes servants' presumption is not counted such;
"You know all things, my master; my thoughts you know well;
"But altho' I'm a servant, these thoughts I must tell.

DOHA 219

"You're the storehouse of love, my lord, kindly and good,
"And in ev'rything honest and true;
"In all things you give all men your trust and your love,
"Since you think all must be just like you.

CHAUPAI 228

"Ev'ry man of the world, when to power he comes,
"In his folly to pride and conceit soon succumbs.
"Bharat knows what is right, he was honest and wise,
"And devoted to you, as the world testifies;
"But now into the office of king he has stepped,
"And the bound'ries of honour and truth has o'erleapt.
"Perverse brother! Now eager his pow'r to advance,
"Knowing Rama's alone in the woods, sees his chance;
"He has taken bad counsel, an army prepared,
"And to make sure his kingdom forth now has he fared;
"Our brothers have laid wicked plans and dissembled,
"And now in this place have their forces assembled;
"At heart if he's not planned a treacherous thing,
"Horses, chariots and elephants why should he bring?
"Do not blame him, as tho' only he had turned bad;
"The world over, on coming to pow'r men go mad.

DOHA 220

"The great Moon-God his own teacher's wife once defiled;
"Nahush called for a Brahman-borne chair;
"'Gainst all scripture and law Vena claimed to be God;
"Such the things that in pride men will dare!

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CHAUPAI 229

"Indra, Trisanku, Sahasrabahu—all these,
"Came to shame on attaining their royal degrees;¶

"So this plan Bharat's made and upon it has set;
" 'Tis well said one must not leave one foe or one debt.

"But he made one mistake; when he planned his attack,
"He had no fear of you, thinking helpers you lack;

"But he'll learn; all his pow'rs will the lesson engage,
"When in fight he sees Rama today hot with rage!"

This much said, with the spirit of prudence forgot,
He was fired with the spirit of war on the spot;

Bowing low before Rama, his head in the dust,
With great force he went on, as tho' speak out he must:

"Do not count this, my master, in me a great fault;
"Bharat's gone much too far, must be made now to halt;

"It is hard to keep anger in check when defied,
"With my bow in my hand and my lord at my side!

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

DOHA 221

"All men know I'm of great Raghu's line, Rama's brother,
"A warrior too born and bred!
"What is lower than dust of the earth? Yet when kicked
"It uprises and falls on one's head!"

CHAUPAI 230

With hands clasped, he stood upright, permission to ask;
The Heroic awakened from sleep for its task!

With hair tightly bound, at this side hanging quiver,
In hand bow and shaft, he said, eager as ever,

"Today I'll serve Rama, win fame by great deeds,
"And in battle teach Bharat the lesson he needs!

"My two brothers, who Rama have dared to insult,
"Shall both sleep on the battle-field as the result!

¶ Here Tulsi refers to well-known legends; Growse gives them in brief.

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"It is good that they've come, bringing with them this host!
"By my anger today I will make good my boast!

"As a bold lion scatters an elephant herd;
"As a hawk swiftly pounces upon a small bird;

"So my brothers today I'll o'erthrow on the field,
"If with all this great host they to me do not yield.

"Tho' great Siva should come to their aid, I declare
"I'll defeat them in fight! This by Rama I swear!"

DOHA 222

In such anger he spoke and with such a great oath,
That all realms and their guards, at the sight
And the thundering noise, wished to run from their places,
Confused and confounded with fright.

CHAUPAI 231

From the heavens a voice, thro' the world's great alarm,
Came extolling the power of Lakshman's strong arm:

"None, my son, can tell fully, indeed none can know
"The courageous and majestic might that you show;

"But whatever the work, good or ill, we are told
"It is best to think over it first, then be bold;

"To act daringly first and then have to revise
"What was done, say men learned and books, is not wise."

Lakshman, hearing this voice, in his shame wished to hide;
But consoling him, Sita and Rama replied:

"What you say is upheld by men tried and sincere,
"That the passion for rule is of all most severe;

"Kings who never have served with the godly and pure,
"Quickly come 'neath the spell of this strong passion's lure.

"But remember, there never was heard of or seen
"One like Bharat in goodness so earnest and keen.

DOHA 223

"Tho' he come to the Great Triad's throne, by the passion
"For rule he cannot be allured;

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"Can the vast Milky Sea of the gods by a few
"Drops of curdled milk ever be soured?

CHAUPAI 232

"Maybe darkness might swallow the young sun full-orbed;
"Or the wide-spreading heaven in clouds be absorbed;
"Or a hoof's little puddle might drown a great saint;
"Or the earth might forget its long-suff'ring restraint;
"Or mountains by mosquitoes' buzzing be lifted;
"But Bharat by love of pow'r could not be shifted!
"I swear by yourself, Lakshman, and by our father,
"No brother is truer than Bharat. Yea, rather—
"The Lord, when he made all things and their laws fixed,
"Good and evil, like water and milk, then he mixed;
"The Sun-Race is a lake in which Bharat was born
"As a swan, good and ill to divide and discern;¶
"Shunning evil like water, like milk good he takes,
"And by glory and goodness the world brighter makes."

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

As the goodness of Bharat Lord Rama rehearsed,
In the ocean of love he was wholly immersed.

DOHA 224

As they heard Rama's words and beheld how he loved
His young brother, there rose on all sides,
From the thousand-tongued gods, praise of Rama: "There's none
"Like the Lord in whom all good abides!

CHAUPAI 233

"If Bharat had never been born, then to whom
"Could Earth turn, the great burden of Right to assume?
"To tell of his goodness must baffle a poet!
"Without your aid, Raghunath, no one could know it."

¶ The swan is supposed to have the power to divide milk from water.

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This voice Sita, Rama and Lakshman all heard,
With a joy that defied all expression by word.

With his people Prince Bharat was bathing meanwhile
In the sacred stream, having come many a mile.

From ministers, teacher and mothers receiving
Permission, and all of them on the bank leaving,

He set out with Guha and Shatrughna, bound
For the place where might Rama and Sita be found.

He shrank as his mother's great wrong he remembered,
And many sad thoughts his uneasy mind cumbered:

"If Rama and Sita and Lakshman should hear
"I have come, they will leave and go elsewhere, I fear.

DOHA 225

"If he thinks I'm my mother's accomplice, whatever
"He does will not match my deserts;
"But he may, wrong forgiving, receive me as one
"Who supports him and never subverts.

CHAUPAI 234

"But whether as one who is vile he reject me,
"Or as one who faithfully serves him respect me,

"My refuge is at his feet, no other place;
"Best of masters is he, tho' he know my disgrace;

"Even fishes and forest birds world-wide are known
"For unfailing adherence to laws and their own."

As he brooded upon these things, Bharat stepped out,
Weak and fainting in body from love and from doubt;

Thoughts of Kaikeyi's wrong urged him oft to turn back;
But the strength of his love kept him firm in his track;

Whenever he thought of the love he had tasted
With Rama, his feet moved more quickly and hasted;

As thus he went on, his condition was worse
Than a water-fly borne on a stream's winding course.

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As Bharat between love and worrying shifted,
Right out of himself was his boatman friend lifted.

DOHA 226

Good omens began to come, which Guha noted,
And pondered what each might portend:
"They mean sorrow will pass, joy will follow," he said,
"But again grief will come in the end."

CHAUPAI 235

Bharat knew what his helper had said must be true,
As to Lord Rama's hermitage nearer he drew;

The glad sight of those rocks and the wood made him feel
Like a man who is starving and sees a good meal;

Or like people in troubles of every kind,
Who have suffered in body, in goods and in mind,

And who come to a kingdom and country of ease;
The condition of Bharat was happy like these.

THE JOURNEY RESUMED

In the woods Rama's presence lit up ev'rything,
As the subjects are happy ruled by a good king;

Where high Virtue is counsellor, where Wisdom rules,
And the forest the fair country which he controls;

Law and Temp'rance his soldiers; his fortress the hill;
And for beautiful queens he has Peace and Goodwill;

Where the ruler is perfect and joy is complete,
As he trustfully worships at Lord Rama's feet.

DOHA 227

Here having defeated his foe—King Delusion—
In unbroken sway Wisdom ruled;
'Twas an era of joy and prosperity in all
The land which this ruler controlled.

CHAUPAI 236

Hamlets, villages, towns in this land of the woods,
Here and there, were the hermit-saints' many abodes;

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For his subjects the king had the beasts and the birds
Of all kinds, numberless in their great flocks and herds;

Deers, elephants, buffaloes, boars, hares and horses,
Wolves, lions and tigers—these made up his forces,

Their enmity gone, all together were grazing,
A thing to extol, for 'twas truly amazing;

The elephants' cries, noise of streams and of falls,
Were like great drums and trumpets for different calls;

Flocks of water-birds, pheasants, cuckoos, parrots, quails
Made glad noises; swans sported, glad females and males;

Peacocks danced to the music of bees' busy hum;
From all sides to this kingdom had happiness come;

Creepers, grasses and trees fruits and flowers displayed,
And the court's joy and beauty the greater thus made.

DOHA 228

As he saw Rama's beautiful hill, Bharat's love
In his loving heart yet more increased;
He rejoiced as an ascetic finding the fruit
Of his rigours, and from them released.

CHAUPAI 237

Then the boatman ascended a hillock near by,
And to Bharat said, pointing with arm raised on high,

"Lift your gaze, my good lord, to that clump, if you please,
"Of *tamala, pakar, jaman* and mango trees;

"A big banyan you'll see in the midst of them all,
"A most beautiful tree, grand, wide-spreading and tall;

"You can see its red fruit, its leaves dark-hued and dense;
"It gives shade the year round, cool in heat most intense;

"It would seem God mixed darkness and dawn well together,
"And made it with beauty all sessions to weather.

"Near by is a stream, by which Rama selected
"The place where his simple grass hut is erected;

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"There Rama and Lakshman have, with their own hands,
"Lovely *tulsi* shrubs planted, near where their hut stands;

"With her lotus-like hands Sita, as you will see,
"Has set up a small shrine in the shade of that tree.

DOHA 229

"There Sita and Rama oft sit in the midst,
"Of the saints as they tell of past glories;
"They listen to scriptures both ancient and modern,
"To history, legends and stories."

CHAUPAI 238

With joy Bharat thrilled and with tears his eyes glistened,
As, watching the tree, to his friend's words he listened.

The brothers went rev'rently on 'neath a spell;
Of their love the divinest tongues scarcely could tell;

They were happier Rama's footprints to behold,
Than a pauper who has that which turns all to gold;

They applied grains of dust to their heart, eyes and head,
And rejoiced as tho' into his presence now led.

Birds and beasts, creatures living and inanimate,
Were entranced, seeing Bharat's remarkable state.

Soon his guide, overwhelmed by his love, lost his road;
Then the gods, show'ring blossoms, the way to him showed.

The saints and the sages looked on all enraptured;
They said, giving praise and by love wholly captured,

"If Bharat were not here on earth, who could give
"Movement to the infirm, firmness to those who live?

DOHA 230

"In the bottomless ocean of Bharat's great soul,
"For the gods and the saints, Raghubir,
"With Mount Exile has churned and has brought out the nectar
"Divine of love warm and sincere."¶

¶ As Vishnu churned with Mt. Mandara in the Ocean of Milk for Immortality.

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CHAUPAI 239

In the shade of the trees Lakshman had not yet spied
The two handsome young brothers with Guha their guide;

But to Bharat there plainly appeared, where he stood,
Rama's hermitage home of pure joy and true good.

All burning distress left him now as he entered,
Like saints reaching life's goal on which they have ventured;

He saw Lakshman standing in front of his master,
Who answered as questions came fast and yet faster;

His hair in a knot, hermit's robe bound below,
Shaft in hand, quiver hung, on his shoulder his bow;

By the altar sat sages and saints; with them there
Sat both Rama and Sita, a glorious pair;

Clad in hermit's attire, knotted hair, bodies tanned,
As tho' Love and his Queen here as hermits might stand;

In his hands Rama laughingly bow and shaft twirled,
He who quenches the pain of all souls in the world.

DOHA 231

In that gath'ring of saints shone both Sita and Rama
Resplendent before Bharat's eyes;
As tho' Faith and the Spirit Supreme sat embodied
Amid those most learned and wise.

CHAUPAI 240

With his brother and friend, Bharat stood in a trance,
No thought now of the sorrow or joy that might chance;

"Oh, forgive me, my master, forgive!" he implored,
And fell down like a log before Rama his lord.

The love Lakshman sensed in what Bharat was saying,
And knew in his heart that his brother was praying;

He could not embrace him, he could not ignore him;
Two ways was he pulled, seeing two things before him;

On one hand his duty to Rama he favoured;
He loved Bharat, that pulled him too; thus he wavered;

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He clung to his duty, but much was his plight
Like a boy's when he pulls on a high-flying kite.

Then he lovingly said, as he made a low bow,
"Raghunath, it is Bharat who's greeting you now."

Rama quickly sprang up, as by love calmness broke,
Here and there flinging bow, arrows, quiver and cloke.

DOHA 232

The All-gracious One clasped to his bosom his brother;
Love moved him; naught else could he do;
Those were lost to themselves who saw Bharat and Rama
Embrace; one indeed were these two.

CHAUPAI 241

Such a meeting, such love, never can be described,
Tho' the essence of poetic pow'r be imbibed;

Lost to self, lost to reason, to knowledge and thought
Were these brothers love-filled, in their strong passion caught.

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

I can't tell their love in my poor human weakness;
The poet may seek but not find any likeness;

'Tis words and their meaning the poet's gift uses,
As dances the dancer to measures he chooses;

A sea is the love of these brothers unbounded,
That by the divinest can never be sounded;

My poor mind can offer no words fit to pass;
One can never get music from strings of mere grass.

As the meeting of Rama and Bharat they saw,
Overwhelmed were the gods; they all trembled with awe;

Then their leader awakened them out of their daze,
And they rained flowers down as they lifted their praise.

DOHA 233

Rama lovingly welcomed Shatrughna, and then
To the boatman the welcome repeated;
And meanwhile with gladness and courtesy Bharat
By fortunate Lakshman was greeted.

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CHAUPAI 242

Lakshman welcomed Shatrughna with words true and fond;
Welcomed also the boatman into the same bond.

Next the newly-come brothers saluted each saint,
And were blessed, sharing joys that now knew no restraint.

With his brother then Bharat, in warm loving trust,
Before Sita bowed low with his head in the dust;

Repeating their homage, they asked for her blessing;
She lifted and seated them, each one caressing;

She blessed them in silence deep down in her mind;
Lost in love so o'erwhelming, no words could she find.

When he saw Sita lovingly t'ward him disposed,
Bharat lost all his fear, mind now calm and composed.

Not a sound or a question! But all voices stilled,
They forgot themselves wholly, their hearts with love filled.

Then the boatman took courage, by thoughtfulness pressed,
And with hands humbly folded he made his request:

DOHA 234

"My lord, the queen-mothers, the captains and ministers,
"Servants and folk of the city,
"Have come with Vashishth, the great saint, all distressed
"By your absence and seeking your pity."

CHAUPAI 243

He the Steadfast, Upright One, the Ocean of Grace,
When he heard that his teacher had come to that place,

Left Shatrughna to take care of Sita, and ran
In a hurry to welcome that most holy man.

When they saw him again he and Lakshman both fell
At his feet with an eagerness words cannot tell;

The saintly one, seeing them, sprang to his feet
And embraced them, as eager the princes to meet.

Then the boatman a-thrill told his name from afar,
And saluted the saint; more than that could not dare;

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But the saint gave him welcome, as in truth he must,
As Lord Rama's friend Love, gathered up from the dust.

With their flowers gods lauded this greatest of joys,
True devotion to Rama, a joy that ne'er cloys:

"This poor boatman, the meanest is he of the mean,
"And none nobler than saint Vashishth ever was seen;

DOHA 235

"Yet this monarch of saints greater love than to Lakshman
"In meeting this boatman has shown;
" 'Tis the fruit of true faith in Lord Rama, a power
"That gods and men truly must own."

CHAUPAI 244

When he saw how the people were sad and distressed,
In his mercy Lord Rama each one of them blessed;

For his comfort to each one the thing he might crave,
In the way that he wished it, at once Rama gave;

He and Lakshman embraced ev'ry one, and removed
In a trice all that bitter and burdensome proved.

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

In Rama such things are not strange or surprising;
In water-pots countless one sun shows its rising.

The people all embraced the boatman, uplifted
By love and all praising the good fortune gifted.

The queen-mothers, each showing sorrow's deep lines,
Seemed to Rama like delicate, frost-bitten vines.

First he welcomed Kaikeyi, thus trying to win,
By his kind trustful spirit, her mind from her sin;

Low he fell at her feet, sought to help in her needs,
Putting blame upon Destiny, Dark Fate and Deeds.

DOHA 236

Then he welcomed the other queens and to them said,
Trying insight and comfort to bring,
"Put no blame upon any one, pray; the whole world
"Must be subject to God as its king."

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CHAUPAI 245

The wife of their teacher and all Brahmanesses
With her, by the brothers—like highest goddesses—

Were greeted with loving and rev'rent esteem,
And their blessing gave back with their love's happy gleam.

The brothers the feet of Sumitra with pleasure
Embraced, like poor beggars on finding great treasure.

They came to Kausalya again last of all,
Moved by love overwhelming at her feet to fall;

In tender affection their mother enswathed them,
And pressing them close, in warm tears of love bathed them.

The joy and grief mingled could never by poet
Be told; dumb men can't tell of taste, tho' they know it.

The brothers at length asked their teacher to come,
In his graciousness, with them to their hermit home;

At the saint's word the people, too, made plans that day,
Looking over the sites, seeking places to stay.

DOHA 237

Then Rama with Lakshman and Bharat, their mothers,
The Brahmans and ministers took,
With Vashishth and with many more folks who had come,
To their simple serene hermit nook.

CHAUPAI 246

To the feet of the saint Sita her homage brought,
And received the rich blessings that from him she sought;

To his wife and her woman-companions she bid
A warn welcome, with love beyond words but not hid;

Again and again at their feet she fell, speaking
Her love in this way and from them blessing seeking.

The queens looked on Sita in shudd'ring surprise;
"She so delicate here!" they thought, closing their eyes;

"She is like a young swan in a fowler's dread clutch;
"God is wrong to do this, make her suffer so much."

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As they gazed at her there, they were all deeply pained;
But what Fate has determined, that must be sustained.

The daughter of Janak then went forward bravely,
Her dark lotus-eyes filled with warm tears, anad gravely

Bowed low and responded to each queen's embrace;
O'er the earth at that time spread compassion and grace.

DOHA 238

Again and again she bowed low at their feet,
And embraced them with love's eager zest;
From their hearts they all lovingly blessed her and prayed,
"On you ever may good fortune rest."

CHAUPAI 247

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

The saint, seeing Sita and queens agitated
By love, asked them all to be quietly seated;

He showed the assembly how changes are rife
In the world, and then spoke of the chief ends of life;

How Dasrath had passed into eternal morrow,
Which when Rama heard gave him bitterest sorrow,

By love for himself had his father been taken
He knew; thus the strength of the strongest was shaken.

With Lakshman and Sita the queens all lamented,
As thunderbolt-like this bad news was presented;

Indeed, the whole comp'ny was stirred in a foment
Of woe, as tho' Dasrath had died at that moment.

The sage then both Rama and people exhorted,
And all to the stream for their bathing resorted.

That day without water or food Rama passed;
At the saint's word the people maintained the same fast.

DOHA 239

Raghunandan, with love and devotion, next morning
Performed as by Vashishth commanded,
With reverence due, all the funeral rites
Of his father, as duty demanded.

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CHAUPAI 248

He who scatters the darkness of sin like the sun,
Became clean, all these scriptural rites having done;

He whose name is a fire to consume threads of wrong,
Which remembered gives gladness and blessing life-long,

Became pure as does one who—by saints 'tis decreed—
Bathes in Ganges, from all other pilgrimage freed.

Rama when, since his cleansing two more days had gone,
Asked the saintly one this thoughtful word to pass on:

"The people must here, sir, be troubled and fretting,
"For food only water and wild fruit they're getting;

"My mothers and brothers and people I see
"In distress; like an age seems each moment to me;

"Kindly take them all back to the homes they have left;
"You are here, the king's gone, Avadh's wholly bereft;

"It is daring for me to presume, sir, thus far;
"Do what seems to you best, what will no pleasure mar."

DOHA 240

"Rama, bridge of all good, home of mercy are you!"
Said the saint; "From your heart thus you speak;
"But the people have long been distressed; these two days
"They have found with you rest that they seek."

CHAUPAI 249

When they heard Rama's words, all the people were shocked
And disturbed, as at sea ships are violently rocked;

But the words of the saint again settled their minds,
As at sea ships are steadied by fav'rable winds.

They all bathed in that river at morn, noon and eve,
Which once seen destroys sins that to sinful ones cleave;

They constantly filled eager eyes with his vision,
And honoured with gladness that happy provision;

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They oft went to see Rama's mountain and wood,
Where no sorrow was named, all was joyous and good;
Where streams flowed with water like nectar supernal,
And fevers were cooled by winds pleasantly vernal;
Where grew countless creepers, plants, grasses and trees,
With their fruits, flowers, foliage all tastes to please;
Where from tall rocks and trees came their comforting shade;
Where by all indescribable beauty was made.

DOHA 241

Where in beautiful pools happy water-birds played;
And bees hummed where the lotuses bloomed;
Where, forgetting their feuds, birds and beasts of all kinds
Lives of friendliness fearless assumed.

CHAUPAI 250

The men of the forest, Bhils, Kirats and Kols,
Brought sweet nectar-like honey in simple earth-bowls;
They made also leaf-baskets and filled them with roots
Sweet and tender, fresh herbs, and the tastiest fruits;
They courte'usly asked all to take as a favour,
And told each thing's name with its distinctive flavour.
Those eating, some price for this urged them to take;
But the givers refused, giving for Rama's sake;
And they lovingly said, as the price they returned,
"Holy men take from us who our love have discerned;
"You are noble and good, we are lowly in race;
" 'Tis enough that we share Rama's vision and grace;
"We have met with you also; things hard to attain
"As the Ganges' pure flow in a dry desert plain;
"We're low-born, Rama's kindly; on him hope depends;
"Treat us as does your king you, his subjects and friends,

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DOHA 242

"Think of this; be you kindly like him, and acknowledge
"Our love; pray, no longer demur;
"Take our fruits, herbs and roots; make us happy, and thus
"Life's true blessings upon us confer.

CHAUPAI 251

"You have come to the forest as our belov'd guests,
"Tho' we all are unworthy to serve your behests;
"Not much can we give you, just poor food and fuel,
"Thus foresters' love is shown and finds renewal;
"The best way known to us of serving your wishes,
"Is not to steal from you your clothing and dishes!
"We're ignorant folk, taking life all the while;
"Evil-minded, low-born, full of folly and guile;
"Day and night we do evil, the wrongs we have willed;
"But it still leaves us naked, with stomachs unfiilled!
"Of goodness we never have dreamed, never striven
"To find it; but this Rama's vision has given;
"When once the Lord's lotus-like feet we beheld,
"All our troubles and sorrows and sins were dispelled."
At these words all the people from Avadh rejoiced;
Highest praise at their happy good fortune they voiced.

CHHAND 10

Their fortune they praised, And their voices they raised,
Happy people, in happiest sound;
As they met and conversed, Love and joy they rehearsed,
At divine Sita-Rama's feet found.
Here the townspeople all, Felt their love to be small,
With the foresters' love when compared;
Even iron will float, If it's borne in a boat;
Rama's kindness here one and all shared,

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SORATHA 9

The people all wandered together
About in the woods; happy day after day;
Just as, even before rainy weather
Begins, frogs and peacocks exult in small showers.

CHAUPAI 252

In love the townspeople with nothing else reckoned,
A day seemed to pass from them swift as a second.

Like service for each mother Sita performed,
To the ways and the wishes of each one conformed;

Her deep secret by no one but Rama was seen;
Well he knew her illusion's pow'r; she was his queen!

She here made them depend on her service, and they
For her comfort and helpfulness blessed her each day.

Kaikeyi was moved to the deepest contrition,
By seeing the brothers' and Sita's condition;

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

"O God," she prayed inwardly with ev'ry breath,
"May the earth open for me and bring peaceful death!

"By the laws of man, scriptures and poets we're told,
"Even hell Rama's enemy never will hold."

In the minds of the people was one doubtful fear;
"Will our Rama to Avadh return, or stay here?"

DOHA 243

Bharat ate naught all day and could not sleep at night,
By one worrying question perplexed;
Like a fish that, when water is almost dried up,
Twists about in the mud, sorely vexed.

CHAUPAI 253

"Fate worked in the guise of my mother be-devilled,
"As rip'ning rice-fields by misfortune are levelled;

"The crowning of Rama how can I secure?
"For this no plan I see that is certain and sure;

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"If Vashishth's command were 'Return!' he'd fulfil it;
"But he'll not command unless Rama should will it;

"His mother might ask him and he not resist,
"But as mother of Rama she'll never insist.

"But a vassal am I, naught I say can have weight;
"Times and God are against me, a victim of fate;

"If I should resist, 'twould be wrong, for much vaster
"Than Kailas is duty of servant to master."

He worried all night, as he pondered this question,
But thought of no plan, found no helpful suggestion.

At dawn, having bathed, to greet Rama he went,
And was sitting, but just then the saint for him sent.

DOHA 244

Bharat rev'rently bowed at the feet of the saint,
And then sat down, his master permitting;
Around him the ministers, nobles and Brahmans
In council were solemnly sitting.

CHAUPAI 254

The saint said to those gathered there at his call,
"Listen to me, good Bharat and councillors all;

"As Lord Supreme, Rama no homage need render,
"The Sun of the Sun-Race, of Right the Defender;

"Truth's Source, Scripture's Guardian, all life he sustains;
"By his birth here as man the world blessedness gains;

"Yet both parents and teachers he gladly obeys;
"As the gods he befriends, hosts of devils he slays;

"Be it love or law, hope for life future or this,
"None but he knows the truth, truth without him we miss;

"Heav'nly bodies, great gods, guards of all realms and climes;
"All appearance, all action, all souls, states and times;

"Rulers earthly, unearthly, whoever they be;
"Spirit-trances, rites, spells, things in scripture we see—

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"You will learn if you think as the matter demands,
"That these things are all subject to Rama's commands.

DOHA 245

"It will be for our good if at all times and now
"Rama's wish and command we all heed;
"So consider this wisely and thoughtfully, as
"With discussion and plans we proceed.

CHAUPAI 255

"We shall all be delighted if king he is crowned,
"Well we know that in this joy for all will be found;
"But how get him to go back to Avadh? There lies
"Our big problem; for that we must plan and advise."
They all listened with care to the saint's ev'ry word,
Good both now and forever was in what they heard;
But none answered; they sat there in sad silent rows,
Till at last, with head bowed and hands clasped, Bharat rose,

And replied, "Many kings in the Sun-Race have reigned;
"Greater pow'r than his ancestors each have attained;
"To his father and mother his birth each one owed;
"But his fate, good or ill, was determined by God.
"Saintly one, 'twas by your blessing given to each,
"That with pains overcome, he could happiness reach;
"By you Fate and its course, all men know, has been changed;
"None can hinder or alter things you have arranged.

DOHA 246

"But I'm troubled by this, that you ask us, ask me,
"To consider this thing and decide."
As he heard these words loving and humble, Vashishth
Was delighted, and to them replied:

CHAUPAI 256

"Yes, son, it has been so, but by Rama's kindness;
"To look for success against him is sheer blindness;

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"There's one way—I shrink from it; but wise men choose
"To let part go when threatened, and not the whole lose;

"Rama, Sita and Lakshman may come back, my child,
"If Shatrughna and you to the woods are exiled."

On hearing these words, the two lads were delighted;
Their bodies were thrilled, their minds greatly excited;

Their joy o'er their frame seemed such splendour to fling,
As tho' Dasrath were living and Rama were king.

Small loss to the people, great gain as the sequel;
But weeping queens seemed to see gain and loss equal.

Said Bharat to Vashishth, "So let it be done,
"By the means greatest blessing for all will be won;

"I will stay in the forest as long as I live,
"Nothing else could to me so much happiness give.

DOHA 247

"To both Rama and Sita my heart is well-known,
"Wholly good and all-knowing are you;
"So I pray you, my master, to do as you say,
"Make these words of yours quickly come true."

CHAUPAI 257

As Bharat to loving persuasion resorted,
The saint and the council were wholly transported;

A sea Bharat's glory, on whose shining sands,
In the guise of a woman, the saint's wise mind stands,

She is anxious to cross, tries her best, seeks some craft,
But there's no ship or boat—No! not even a raft!

None could tell or contain Bharat's glory; the shells
Of a pond cannot hold all the vast ocean's swells.

Bharat found a warm place in the heart of the saint,
And to Rama Vashishth with the councillors went;

The lord gave them welcome and bade them be seated;
They sat when the saint Rama's wishes repeated.

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Vashishth then spoke up, his words carefully choosing,
The place, time and all circumstances perusing:
"Hear Rama, all knowing, all good, all divine,
"Of all righteousness, truth, faith and wisdom the mine.

DOHA 248

"You know ev'ryone's thoughts, good or evil; you dwell
"In the spirit of every man;
"What is best for your people, your mother and Bharat
"Consider, and then wisely plan.

CHAUPAI 258

"We speak without thought, but our painful need knowing,
"As gamblers see nothing but dice they are throwing."
To these words of Vashishth said Rama, "O wise
"And good master, in your hands the surest plan lies;
"Good for all is it when in your favour we bask,
"Doing what you command as our happiest task;
"Give me first of all your command, to pursue it
"Shall be my endeavour, most humbly I'll do it;
"Then call on the others, put each to the test,
"And I know each will do in your service his best."
"What you say is the truth, Rama," Vashishth replied,
"But the love Bharat shows all my thought has defied;
"Again and again must I say this, and stress it,
"His loyalty puzzles my mind—I confess it;
"In what Bharat wishes, with Siva as witness
"I say, you will find truest blessing and fitness.

DOHA 249

"First listen to what Bharat wishes, then plan
"As his spirit and purpose you capture;
"And act for the kingdom by following laws
"Of the saints, of the world and of scripture."

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

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CHAUPAI 259

When he saw how to Bharat Vashishth was attached,
Rama's happiness that of the saintly one matched;

That Bharat to truth was devoted and fervent
He knew, and in thought, word and deed his own servant.

He said, as the saint gave permission to speak,
In a voice that was pleasingly cheerful and meek,

"By my father's dear feet and yourself, sir, I swear,
"There's no brother like Bharat on earth anywhere;

"Those loyal and true to the lord by tradition
"And scripture are shown as in blessed condition;

"But since 'tis your longing and love that are set
"Upon him, Bharat's future is happier yet;

"Here to speak of his praises, tho' ample the cause,
"When himself he is present, may well make me pause;

" 'Twill be for our good to hear him and stand by it."
This much having said, Rama ceased and was quiet.

DOHA 250

To Bharat the saint then said, "Speak out, my son,
"Do not hesitate now on your part;
"To the ocean of kindness, your dearly loved brother,
"Tell plainly the thoughts of your heart."

CHAUPAI 260

As he heard the saint's words, Bharat knew in his mind
Both his master and Rama were kindly inclined;

But knowing on him rested now the whole matter,
He pondered it deeply, yet no word could utter;

With quivering frame in the council he stood,
While his lotus eyes filled with his love's tearful flood.

At last by these words his long silence was broken,
"All that I could say you, my masters, have spoken;

"Full well do I know my dear lord's kindly spirit;
"He never will charge one with sin or demerit;

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"On me chiefly kindness and love he bestowed,
"But he never, not even in play, anger showed;

"In childhood he never would shun or desert me,
"And never in body or mind did he hurt me;

"Tho' winning in play, he would give me the game;
"I have seen his great goodness; 'twas ever the same.

DOHA 251

"I also am so overcome by his love,
"That before him no words can I speak;
"Still my eyes are unsatisfied, always to see him
"They lovingly, longingly seek.

CHAUPAI 261

"But our mutual fondness God could not endure;
"Thro' my mother, division he tried to secure.

"But saying such things here is not in my favour;
"To sing one's own praise always leaves an ill savour!

"To say I am good and my mother is evil,
"Would be worse a thousand times, make me a devil!

"Not by sowing millet are rice-ears obtained,
"Nor from shells of a mud pond are pearls ever gained.

"No one dare I think guilty, not even in dreams;
"But a bottomless ocean my ill-fortune seems;

"Talking ill of my mother in anger begins,
"Not perceiving 'tis all the result of my sins;

"I search my own heart, but all searching defeats me;
"By one thing alone am I sure good awaits me;

"My brother as lord, you as teacher assure me
"The end will be happy, whate'er lies before me.

DOHA 252

"In this sacred gath'ring and place, in the presence
"Of both, my true thoughts I disclose;
"Whether falsehood or truth, whether love or pretence,
"Is a thing that each one of you knows.

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CHAUPAI 262

"That the king passed away having love's oath fulfilled,
"All men know, and the wrong that my mother had willed;

"But never could I bear to see the queens languish
"In grief and the townspeople burning with anguish;

"Yet I am the cause of these terrible things—
"This I hear, this I know; how the painful thought stings!

"When I heard Raghunath had set out for the woods,
"Walking barefoot, with but hermit's clothing and goods,

"And with him were Lakshman and Sita, I hurried
"To this spot, by Siva I swear, greatly worried;

"And when simple boatmen of love gave such token,
"My heart must be iron-like not to have broken!

"I'm here now and see it all with my own eyes,
"Yet my base soul lives on, sees—and yet death defies!

"The snakes and the scorpions, when they set eyes on
"Those dear ones, forgot their intense deadly poison.

DOHA 253

"A woman has treated that same Rama, Sita
"And Lakshman as bitterest foes;
"Whom else but her son should the gods with severest
"Distresses and trials oppose?"

CHAUPAI 263

They listened to Bharat and his troubled pleading,
His justice, pained love and humility heeding;

With sorrow the councillors gathered were smitten,
And seemed like a lotus-bed lately frost-bitten.

The saint tried to comfort the prince, as he told,
To give guidance, great stories and legends of old.

Then the Moon of the Forest, the Sun of his Race,
Raghunandan, spoke words full of fitness and grace:

"Come, brother, let not your heart be thus despondent,
"The ways of all souls upon God are dependent;

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"In all realms and times those of highest report,
"As I well know, of you and your goodness fall short;
"He who calls you perverse, on whatever pretext,
"Will lose ev'rything both in this world and the next;
"Only fools to Kaikeyi the blame will ascribe,
"Who from men wise and saintly truth never imbibe.

DOHA 254

"But your name, for the one who recalls it, destroys
"All distresses, all sin, all delusion;
"In this life it gives to him fame at its best,
"In the future life joys in profusion.

CHAUPAI 264

"I say, and with Siva as witness maintain it,
"This world exists, Bharat, because you sustain it;
"By dark, groundless thoughts let your mind not be ridden;
"However men try, love and hate can't be hidden;
"The birds and beasts come to the saint without fear,
"But run off when the hunter they see coming near;
"If wild creatures between good and ill can decide,
"What of man in whom virtue and wisdom reside?
"Well I know you, your spirit and mind, thro' and thro',
"But I tell you, my brother, I'm torn betwixt two—
"The king sent me away in devotion to truth,
"And then gave his own life in fulfilling love's oath;
"I must carefully watch lest his word I neglect;
"Greater still is this fact—you I highly respect;
"Yet more, there's my teacher's command; how deny it?
"Now say what you wish, I will be guided by it.

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

DOHA 255

"I'll do it at once; hesitate then no more;
"Let your mind now be happy and eased."

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At these words of Lord Raghubar, ocean of truth,
The whole council rejoiced, greatly pleased.

CHAUPAI 265

But Lord Indra and with him the heavenly host
Were alarmed, thinking now what they sought for was lost;

Long they pondered and worried, but no way could find,
So in Rama sought refuge at last in their mind;

Worried still, to each other they said, ill at ease,
"Rama's swayed by the love of his true devotees."

They were troubled, recalling saint Durvasa's plight,
When, to save Ambarish, Vishnu put him to flight;

They recalled how the heav'nly ones suffered and feared,
Till, revealed by Prahlad, the Man-Lion appeared.

To each other they whispered, while beating their breasts
In their worry, "Our case now in Bharat's hands rests;

"Only one shows us promise among many ways;
"Rama heeds well the service his true servant pays;

"Let us serve Bharat well with our love from this hour,
"He has Rama by goodness and truth in his pow'r."

DOHA 256

Said the gods' great advisor, on hearing their plan,
"That is fine; great good fortune is yours!
"Serving Bharat thus faithfully for the whole world
"Truest pleasures maintains and restores.

CHAUPAI 266

"If you serve Rama's servant, your future is sealed;
"More than hundreds of heavens' rich stores is its yield;

"Since in Bharat's devotion your trust you have placed,
"God has found you a way; no fears now to be faced;

"See the influence, Indra, that Bharat can hold,
"Since by his simple spirit is Rama controlled;

"Be calm now; there's no cause for worry or weakness,
"For Bharat, you know, is as Rama's own likeness."

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The Supreme One, who knows ev'ry heart, when he learned
What the gods had decided, was greatly concerned;

And Bharat, who realised now more than ever
That all rested with him, long thought these things over;

In all things to heed Rama was his decision,
"In this lies for me my most happy provision;

"He'd break his own promise that I might keep mine;
"Such for me is his care and his loving design.

DOHA 257

"Sita's husband, my brother, has made it his aim
"By his grace my good always to seek."
With these thoughts in his mind, and with hands humbly clasped,
Bharat bowed and began thus to speak:

CHAUPAI 267

BHARAT MEETS RAMA

"My lord, what can I say now, or have said for me,
"O discerner of hearts and compassion's great sea?

"If my teacher is pleased and your lordship is kind,
"That dispels fancied sorrows from my troubled mind;

"Wholly groundless my worry at what seemed my shame;
"If one loses direction, the sun's not to blame!

"My ill fortune, my mother's perverse evil ways,
"Hostile fate, hostile gods, and dark difficult days—

"All united to make my complete downfall sure;
"But he saved me who's known as the Friend of the Poor.

" 'Tis no new novel thing that of him thus I tell;
" 'Tis no secret; the word and the world know it well;

"The whole world lies in evil; One only is good;
"Whence find Goodness if not from the Good, as one should?

"Like the Paradise-Tree, you are kindly disposed;
"Oft affronted, but never to any opposed.

DOHA 258

"If men once recognise and draw near to this tree,
"In its shade all their fears are destroyed;

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"Whether beggar or prince, whether good man or base,
"What they ask for they find unalloyed.

CHAUPAI 268

"Since you both, sage and lord, hold me dear, nothing flouts
"Now my faith; gone are all my old sorrows and doubts!
"So, Compassionate One, do the thing that seems wise,
"In which, with good for me, peace of mind for you lies.
"Mean and evil indeed is the servant who makes
"For his master distress, and his own pleasure takes;
"For a servant to shun his own comfort and greed
"Is far better, and serve his lord's every need.
"If you go back to Avadh, it means good for all;
"But by doing your will countless blessings will fall;
"In this world and the next, thus we find truest wealth,
"Find the fruit of good deeds thus, life's beauty and health.
"Hear, my lord, I beseech you from me one request,
"Then that thing carry out that may seem to you best;
"All the things that in king's coronation are used
"We have brought, and we ask that they be not refused.

DOHA 259

"Ban Shatrughna and me to the woods, and their king
"To the people of Avadh now give;
"Or else to the city send back our two brothers,
"And let me, lord, here with you live;

CHAUPAI 269

"Or let us three brothers together remain
"In the woods, while you go back with Sita again.
"O my master, with whom countless mercies reside,
"Do whatever you will, be your mind satisfied.
"The whole burden, my lord, upon me you have willed,
"One in duties of state and religion unskilled;

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"In whatever I say my own int'rests I serve;
"One oft loses all reason in pain, all reserve.

"Any servant who, given command, answers back
"Is a shame to the shameful, himself shame must lack;

"I myself am a bottomless sea of such faults,
"Yet my master my love and my goodness exalts!

"I'll find, my good lord, in that thing satisfaction
"Which means no misgiving to you or exaction;

"I swear by my lord's feet, and truth thus I tell,
"In this one way alone for man all things are well.

DOHA 260

"Be you pleased, my good master, to give us your orders;
"Around this now all things revolve;
"Do not hesitate; all that you say we will do,
"And in that way our problems we'll solve."

CHAUPAI 270

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

In their joy the gods rained flowers down, the saints broke
Into praise, as these pure guileless words Bharat spoke;

Upon all Avadh's people uncertainty fell,
But the woodsmen and saints their good fortune could tell.

Lord Raghunath sat thinking deeply and quiet;
All saw his condition, themselves subdued by it.

Some messengers came from King Janak just then;
When he heard of it, Vashishth at once called the men;

As they came in they saw Rama there in strange garb;
The sight pained them, as tho' pierced by deadliest barb.

First the saint enquired of them, "What news do you bring
"Of the health and the welfare of Videha's king?"

As his question they heard, humble rev'rence they showed
With hands folded, and quietly said as they bowed:

"You have courte'usly asked of our master and lord,
"And have thus, sir, forever his welfare assured.

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DOHA 261

"But for this, with the death of Kosala's great king
"All our hope of well-being had died;
"Now the people of your realm and ours are as orphans,
"And those of the whole world beside.

CHAUPAI 271

"At news of great King Dasrath's death, in their sadness
"Our king and his people were nigh unto madness;

"To us then Videha seemed true to his name,
"Almost 'unbodied', himself forgot, he became!

"When he heard of the queen's evil doings, he seemed
"Just as helpless as jewel-less serpents are deemed;

"News that Bharat was king and Lord Rama exiled
"To the woods, made our king in his grief well-nigh wild.

"Then he called all his council and said, 'Before you
" 'Is this question; think deeply; say what we should do.'

"They thought long about it, opinions divided;
"To go there or not, none could say, undecided;

"The king at last, having regained thoughtful poise,
"Sent to Avadh four secret and skilful envoys;

" 'Good or evil,' he said, 'Bharat's mind and plans learn;
" 'Let none see you or know you; then quickly return.'

JANAK
ARRIVES AT
CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 262

"They soon found out in Avadh about Bharat's plans,
"And when he set out for Chitrakut,
"The four messengers, having found out all they could,
"Themselves quickly returned to Tirhut.†

CHAUPAI 272

"On arriving they gave to the king and his court
"Of the doings of Bharat their view and report;

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† Another name for Janak's kingdom, the name of that division today.

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"At this monarch, ministers, people and sages
"Were moved by both loving and anxious presages.
"The king his mind rallied and Bharat extolled;
"Then for trusty and heroic captains he called;
"He commended his realm, town and home to their care,
"Bade them elephants, horses and chariots prepare;
"Two hours limit he set, then with no more delay
"Started out, and has not rested once on the way;
"So this morning he bathed at Prayag with his host;
"Then they all, without waiting, the Yamuna crossed;
"Thence to bring him back news he us messengers sent."
This much told, they again to the earth humbly bent.
So Vashishth sent them back to their king, and as guides
With them sent sev'ral men of the forest besides.

DOHA 263

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

The people of Avadh, on hearing of Janak's
Arrival, were highly delighted;
But Rama was deeply disturbed, and poor Indra
Was worried and well-nigh affrighted!

CHAUPAI 273

Kaikeyi perversely, remorseful in shame,
Thought, "What now shall I say and on whom put the blame?"
But the people's delight was increased by this thought,
"We can stay some days more now, the thing we have sought!"
In that way they passed happily that day and night,
Then they all rose and bathed with the new morning light;
Men and women, their morning ablutions all done,
Worshipped Siva, Parvati, Ganesh and the Sun,
Worshipped Lakshmi and Vishnu, as humbly they pled
Their desires, with their hands and their garments outspread:
"May our ruler be Rama, and Sita his queen,
"And our capital, Avadh, in happiness seen;

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"May its populous glory again be displayed,
"And may Bharat the heir of King Rama be made;

"May our lives be refreshed by this nectar from heav'n,
"And by God to the whole world thus blessing be giv'n!

DOHA 264

"In the city may Rama long reign with his teacher's,
"His council's and brother's assistance;"
And this was the last pray'r of all, "While he reigns,
"May we in Avadh end this existence!"

CHAUPAI 274

Saints and sages, compared with these folks and their call,
Said their own austere life and its value seemed small.

When all thus their daily devotions had finished,
They greeted Lord Rama with joy undiminished;

Men, women, of high, low, and middle estate—
All the vision obtained by their own happy fate;

He paid honour to all in the courtliest ways;
To his kindness they answered with sincerest praise:

"From childhood in Rama this nature has flourished;
"Love's ways he has recognised, love he has nourished;

"A sea broad and deep is his courteous care,
"Like his face, eyes and spirit—all guileless and fair."

Fervently to his goodness they all testified,
And their own blessed fortunate lot magnified;

"As his own Rama owns us and such has decreed;
"People so blest must be in this world few indeed!"

DOHA 265

They were newly inspired then with love, upon hearing
That Mithila's¶ king had arrived;
Rama, Sun to the Lotus-like Sun Race, arose
With them all and fit welcome contrived.

¶ Another name for Janak's Kingdom.

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CHAUPAI 275

Raghunath, with his brothers, the saint and the rest
Of the comp'ny, went forward to welcome their guest.

Meanwhile, Chitrakut's holy hill having sighted,
With rev'rence the king from his chariot alighted;

So eagerly rushed he and his to the spot
To see Rama, that pain and fatigue they forgot;

Ev'ry mind sought with Rama and Sita its place;
Without mind, joy or pain leaves no bodily trace.

King Janak seemed drunken with heavenly passion,
As he and those with him came on in this fashion.

On seeing each other the two parties mingled
And met, as their bodies with loving joy tingled;

The king at the feet of the hermits bowed low;
To the king's priests and teachers bowed Rama also;

Thus Rama the visitors met, welcome bade them,
And then with his brothers himself forward led them.

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 266

An ocean well filled with pure water of peace,
Was the hermitage where he resided;
A river was King Janak's kindly concern,
Which to that ocean Raghunath guided.

CHAUPAI 276

Over wisdom's and self-control's firm banks it swept,
Words of grief, stream-like, aiding it as people wept;

Anxious sighing its winds and waves, which in their course
From the banks tore up patience, like trees, by their force;

Its swift flow was made up of lamenting and groans,
With its eddies of worried and terrified moans;

Learned men were the boatmen, their wisdom the craft,
But the oar none could wield, not a one, fore or aft!

Weary trav'llers, the forest-folk, Kirat and Kol,
Sat there hopelessly watching the stream onward roll;

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The stream reached and mixed with the hermitage ocean,
Peace broken thus by agitated commotion;

Their sorrow so overcame each royal host,
That all self-respect, wisdom and patience they lost;

The great virtue and glory which Dasrath's reign crowned,
They extolled, in the sea of grief all well-nigh drowned.

CHHAND 11

In sorrow's sea tossing, With no hope of crossing,
Both women and men were distracted;
They wildly exclaimed, As they thoughtlessly blamed
The Supreme One, "Why has he thus acted?"

As god, saint and sages, Saw King Janak engage
In his mourning and sense of deep loss,
His love seemed to them there, As I, Tulsi, declare,
A great river that no men could cross.

SORATHA 11

The people and sages all told him
Of things that should comfort him in such great sorrow;
But when none of these things consoled him,
Vashishth to him said, "Be of good cheer, O king!

CHAUPAI 277

"Like the sun, your great wisdom disperses all gloom;
"By your works as sun-rays, saints like lotuses bloom;

"Error's grasp can't touch you, tho' it reach fullest length;
"That is Rama and Sita's great love in its strength.

"Of these three types of souls ancient scriptures have preached—
"Worldly, seekers, and saints who perfection have reached;

"In the gath'ring of saints, he is chiefly revered
"To whose heart above all is Lord Rama endeared.

"For knowledge, without love of Rama beside it,
"Is just like a boat with no helmsman to guide it."

The saint thus exhorted King Janak, and then
In the stream at Ramghat they all bathed once again,

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Then, because of their sorrow, that day they all passed
Without food, without water, in grief's complete fast;

That whole day without food even birds and beasts spent,
While the king's kith and kin followed thus love's intent.

DOHA 267

With the people, the two rulers, Rama and Janak,
Again bathed as broke the new morn;
Then beneath a great banyan tree quietly sat,
Bodies wasted, hearts sad and forlorn.

CHAUPAI 278

There were Brahmans from Dasrath's own city, and some
Who with Mithila's king on his journey had come.

Shatanand and Vashishth, fam'ly priests, who both taught
The supreme things of life which in this world they sought,

Then began to discuss, and with learning profound
Knowledge, temp'rance and uprightness sought to propound;

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

Visvamitra too counselled those gathered, and told
Many stories and legends of great ones of old.

Said Rama then to him, "The people have fasted
"With no water; almost two days has this lasted."

The saint said, " 'Tis true, Rama fitly has spoken;
" 'Tis well past mid-day, let the fast now be broken."

King Janak agreed, but replied, " 'Tis not fitting
"For us to take food where just now we are sitting."¶

The people agreed with the king, and once more,
With permission, they all went to bathe as before.

DOHA 268

Just at that very moment, a number of women
And men of the forest came there,
Bringing baskets of flowers and fruits, herbs and roots
Of all kinds, all that each one could bear.

¶ Growse suggests that this refers to the Hindu custom that a man not eat in his son-in-law's house.

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CHAUPAI 279

Rama's hill by his grace granted now all desires;
Just the sight of it quenched at once all sorrow's fires;

Streams and ponds, field and forest—it seemed they all leapt
In their gladness, and love's joyous festival kept;

Fruits and flowers broke out upon each tree and vine;
Birds and beasts called each other in music divine;

The joy of the forest increased beyond measure
Just then, and cool breezes to each one gave pleasure;

The beauty and joy can't be told or recorded,
That earth as its welcome to Janak accorded.

The people now sought, with their bathing completed,
The saints' and their rulers' command to be seated;

Then, looking with joy at the beautiful trees,
Here and there all sat down, now completely at ease;

And Vashishth, Rama's teacher, with no more delay,
Sent them nectar-like food from the gifts brought that day.

DOHA 269

JANAK
ARRIVES AT
CHITRAKUTA

To them all from the fine herbs, roots, flowers and fruits,
He sent many a large well-filled basket;
Greeting gods and guests, priests and ancestors, they ate,
None was stinted and none had to ask it.

CHAUPAI 280

Now the people spent quietly four happy days,
Men and women all happy on Rama to gaze;

Their desires in the two camps pursued but one track,
"Without Sita and Rama we must not go back;

" 'Tis far better to stay with them here in the woods,
"Than to share countless heavens, their comforts and goods;

"He who Rama and Sita and Lakshman deserted,
"Would show his own home and mind sadly perverted.

"Lord Brahma to all his high favour is giving,
"Since we in the forest with Rama are living;

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"Thrice daily we bathe in Mandakini river;
"Our garland is joy, Rama's vision the giver;

"We roam in the woods, hermit homes, Rama's hill,
"And of nectar-like roots and fruits all eat our fill;

"Like a moment will pass for us here twice years sev'n,
"We shall not heed their passing, 'twill be truly heav'n.

DOHA 270

"We are none of us worthy of such joy," they said,
"And we cannot say why we have shared it."
This simple devotion to Rama prevailed
In both camps, and they both thus declared it.

CHAUPAI 281

Their heart's desires all in this manner revealing,
They showed to each other their warm, tender feeling.

A maid Sita's mother then sent, and enquired
Of Kausalya a time for the meeting desired;

She heard the queen-mothers were ready and waiting,
So went with her maidens at once for the meeting.

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

Kausalya true welcome and courtesy showed,
And gave seats to them such as conditions allowed;

There on both sides the courteous love shown and felt
Would, if seen and heard, thunderbolt-hearts surely melt.

As their faint bodies trembled, tears in their eyes rose,
Lost in thought they drew lines on the ground with their toes;

It seemed Sita-Rama's love bodies had borrowed,
Or in many forms Silent Sympathy sorrowed.

At last Sita's mother said, "Hard are God's ways;
"Milky foam with a thunderbolt weapon he flays.

DOHA 271

"Hard are all of his doings; we often get word
"Of sweet nectar, but see only poison;
"Ev'rywhere we see crows, owls and cranes, but heav'n's swan
"Tho' we hear of, we never set eyes on."

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CHAUPAI 282

"God's ways are indeed strange," said Sumitra sadly,
"Perverse and erratic, he seems to act madly;

"His doings seem those of a careless child playing;
"Life giving, preserving and suddenly slaying!"

Said Kausalya, "We can to none blame attach;
"Our own deeds joy or pain, loss or gain for us hatch;

"Action works inexorably; God only knows
"How 'tis done; He the fruit, good or evil, bestows;

"Subject to his decree are all things; he distills
"Poison and nectar too; birth, life and death he wills;

"Grief is vain, sister, mark of a mind all deranged;
"God's illusive world goes on eternal, unchanged;

"When the life and the death of the king come to mind,
"As we ponder, both gain and loss in them we find."

Sita's mother replied, "True and well said, O queen,
"Greater than Avadh's king in good deeds none has been!

DOHA 272

" 'Twill be good and no harm at last, if Rama, Sita
"And Lakshman remain in exile."
But Kausalya with heavy heart answered, "I'm worried
"What Bharat will do all that while.

CHAUPAI 283

"All my sons and their wives, by God's grace and your pray'rs,
"Are like Ganges' fair waters, four pure lovely pairs.

"By Rama I never have sworn, now in fitness,
" 'Tis true what I say and I call him to witness—

"The courtesy, goodness and humility,
"The great brotherly love, trust and gentility,

"Of Prince Bharat the most divine voice cannot tell!
"Can the vast ocean be ladled out with a shell?

"Very often to me has my husband exclaimed,
" 'No light brighter than Bharat in this line e'er flamed!'

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"Gold and gems by a jeweller's testing are tried,
"So a man by the testing of time must abide.

"I should not have spoken like this at this season!
"But by love and sorrow I'm robbed of my reason!"

As to her pure Ganges-like voice they all listened,
The eyes of the queens, overcome by love, glistened.

DOHA 273

Kausalya then rallied herself and said, "Hear me,
"O Mithila's queen, I beseech you!
"Beloved are you of the wisest of men;
"Who among us is able to teach you?

CHAUPAI 284

"O queen, when you find a chance, speak to your lord,
"And suggest to him, but as your own thought and word,

"That at home Lakshman stay, Bharat being removed
"To the forest, and then if this change is approved,

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

"I will think it well over and some plan devise;
"I am worried for Bharat and think this is wise.

"To Rama is Bharat by deep love related,
"It pleases me not that they be separated."

As Kausalya's sweet loving spirit was proved,
All the rest with compassion and wonder were moved;

Streams of flowers and happy cries came from the blest;
Sages, hermits and saints, faint with love, love expressed.

All the queens were fatigued, but they sat as time sped,
Until Sumitra gathered up courage and said,

"Of the night, O queen, already two hours have passed."
When she heard this, Queen Kausalya rose up at last:

DOHA 274

"You should all quickly go to your tents now," she said,
Her heart moved by her warm, earnest love;

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"We can now turn to Mithila's ruler for help,
"And to God the greater Ruler above."

CHAUPAI 285

At these humble, affectionate words, from her seat
Janak's queen rose and said, holding Kausalya's feet,

"In you modesty's fitting and true to your life,
"O queen, as Rama's mother and King Dasrath's wife;

"For the lowest by nobles is honour maintained;
"Smoke by fire, grass by hills, on their heads is sustained,

"Your true servant is Janak in thought, word and deed;
"Always Siva and Parvati give you their aid;

"On earth none more fitted such matters to handle
"The light of the sun is not helped by a candle!

"The will of the gods in the woods having done,
"In Ayodhya will Rama reign long as the sun.

"By him all the gods, sacred beasts, human races
"Will live ever after in their happy places;

"By saint Yajnavalkya long since 'twas foretold,
"And a saint's word, O queen, false we never dare hold."

DOHA 275

This said, she again clasped Kausalya's feet, asking
That Sita might then return with her;
Permission thus happily given, the daughter
Returned to the tent with her mother.

CHAUPAI 286

To all her relatives Sita gave greeting,
To each as seemed fitting at this time of meeting;

They all were exceedingly pained and distressed,
When they saw the fair Janki in hermit's garb dressed.

King Janak, by Rama and Vashishth permitted
His daughter to meet, to the tent was admitted;

The girl whom as love's guest his soul had long fathered,
The king to his bosom here lovingly gathered;

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Flood-like was the love that King Janak's heart held;
His mind sacred Prayag over which the flood swelled;

While the love of his daughter alone stood above
Like a banyan tree, where child-like sat Rama's love,

On whose hand the king grasped as the power that saves,
As did saint Chiranjiv swept away by the waves;¶

But for this, in delusion his mind had been drowned;
Such is glory as in Sita-Rama's love found.

DOHA 276

Sita could not endure to see father and mother
Dismayed by love's sudden invasion;
She rallied herself as Earth's daughter, recalling
Her duty on this grave occasion.

CHAUPAI 287

When he saw her in hermit's dress, Janak was pleased;
By her wifely devotion his love's pain was eased:

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

"You have sanctified, daughter, both fam'lies," he said,
"O'er the world your renown and its brightness will spread!

"Your glory and fame like the Ganges is flowing,
"And on countless worlds its great blessing bestowing;

"The Ganges has three sacred places on earth;
"But by you countless groups of the saints have found birth!"

While thus in his love to her Janak was speaking,
His daughter was quietly inward peace seeking;

Her parents once more with their blessings embraced her,
And gave her good counsel for all that now faced her;

"'Tis not right to stay here tonight," she was thinking
Within herself, shyly and anxiously shrinking;

The queen told the king how their daughter was feeling;
They praised the fine spirit that she was revealing.

¶ A reference to a legend, used as a parable of Janak's love-lorn condition.

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DOHA 277

Again and again they embraced her and courte'usly
Bade her at last their farewell.
Then what Kausalya told her of Bharat, the queen
Saw a good chance her husband to tell.

CHAUPAI 288

When the king of the conduct of Bharat was told,
Nectar-flavoured, sweet-savoured, moon-bright, rich as gold,

Much he praised the young prince, as with tears his eyes filled,
And with rapturous feelings his body was thrilled:

"O my queen, fair of face, bright-eyed, listen with care;
"Bharat's story will free all from bonds of despair;

"Of divine thought I've learned somewhat; often discussed
"In religion, state, morals, what man 'ought' and 'must';

"But to my mind the glory of Bharat is such,
"That I cannot pretend its true limits to touch.

"The supreme and most eloquent god or goddess,
"Poet, priest, wise philosopher—all must confess

"Bharat's character, glory, behaviour and ways,
"Virtues, ideals and piety far beyond praise;

"It gives joy to all who think on it or hear it;
"Like Ganga for sweetness, no nectar comes near it!

DOHA 278

"Of limitless virtue, with none but himself
"Can this unrivalled male be equated!
"As with Mount Sumeru, to measure which poets
"And wise men have all hesitated.

CHAUPAI 289

"Tho' divine tongues may try, 'twill impossible prove,
"As for fish out of water on dry land to move;

"The glory of Bharat, my queen, is unbounded;
"To Rama 'tis known, tho' its praise be not sounded."

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In this way the king, knowing well woman's mind,
Told in love of the truth men in Bharat may find;

Then again, "In their hearts all will think it is good,
"If when Lakshman returns, Bharat go to the wood;

"The love and the confidence cannot be doubted
"Of Bharat and Rama, nor can it be flouted;

"The limit is Bharat of love and attachment,
"And Rama of fair and impartial detachment;

"Prince Bharat has never, on any pretext,
"Given thought to the joys of this world or the next;

"Loving Rama alone, true success one achieves,
"That is what, I am sure, faithful Bharat believes.

DOHA 279

"By intent or forgetfulness, Lord Rama's wishes
"By Bharat will ne'er be denied;
"Do not yield to dejection and sorrow in love,"
Said King Janak—and deeply he sighed.

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

CHAUPAI 290

In discussing the two princes' virtues, so fast
Went the night, that it seemed but a moment had passed.

In the morning the two royal parties awoke,
Bathed, and due worship paid to the gods as day broke;

This all finished, Prince Rama his teacher approached,
And, permission obtaining, his thoughts thus he broached:

"Sir, my mothers, my people and Bharat remain
"In the woods for me, meeting discomfort and pain;

"And here with his band Mithila's royal lordship
"Has stayed, putting up for some days with this hardship;

"I pray you, then, do what occasion demands;
"For the good of them all, my lord, rests in your hands."

This much having said, in abashment he halted;
Saint Vashishth in this noble spirit exulted;

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He said, "Without you, Rama, tho' all seems well,
"To both parties it soon will appear to be hell!

DOHA 280

"You are life of their life, and the soul of their soul,
"And the joy of their joy to them all;
"If a man should love home more than you, it would mean
"Some dread fate soon upon him would fall.

CHAUPAI 291

"May all joy, all action, all piety perish,
"That love for your dear sacred feet does not cherish.

"'Tis impious piety, ignorant knowledge,
"That as supreme Rama's love does not acknowledge:

"With you men are happy, unhappy without you;
"You well know what men in their hearts feel about you;

"All creatures are under your will and constraint;
"With their nature and ways none need make you acquaint;

"Now return to your hermitage." Thus the saint finished
"His words, overcome by his love undiminished.

Vashishth, when with reverence Rama departed,
Tried, as he sought Janak, to be cheerful-hearted;

He gave him the message with which he was charged,
And on Rama's sincere loving spirit enlarged;

Then he said, "Let that course now be taken, O king,
"That will uphold religion and good to all bring.

DOHA 281

"You're a storehouse of knowledge, of wisdom, of goodness;
"True piety's strength and support;
"None but you at this time, grief and doubt can remove
"From our people, our kingdom and court."

CHAUPAI 292

Janak thrilled with emotion at what Vashishth said;
Seeing this, from him Wisdom and Self-restraint fled;

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From love well-nigh faint, at these happ'nings he wondered;
"'Twere better if I had not come here," he pondered;

"By Dasrath sent Rama is here an exile,
"And himself of his love proof has given meanwhile;

"Shall I send him now to a new forest station,
"And go back with happy and wise reputation?"

The Brahmans, ascetics and saints, by his state
And their love, seemed to come to the same troubled fate.

Then the king with his court, his heart steady and stout,
To consider these matters with Bharat, set out;

Prince Bharat came to him, glad welcome accorded,
And gave the best seat his condition afforded;

The king of Tirhut said, "Son Bharat, full well
"Rama's nature you know, no need for me to tell.

DOHA 282

"To all loving and courteous, zealous in piety,
"Nothing but truth does he speak;
"He endures all distress without murm'ring; your wishes
"We all wish to know, so pray speak."

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

CHAUPAI 293

At the things he had heard, thro' and thro' Bharat thrilled,
But controlling himself, said as tears his eyes filled,

"Rama do I revere; like a father are you;
"More for us than saint Vashishth no parent could do;

"Here's this gath'ring of saintly ones, all good and wise;
"You yourself are a sea in which all wisdom lies;

"As your pupil and servant I'm here in your hands;
"Pray advise me and guide me; I'll heed your commands.

"In this gath'ring and place my opinion you seek;
"As one out of his mind and much saddened I speak;

"Forgive me; I speak of great things as I'm able,
"With God now against me and tongue that is feeble.

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"The work of a servant is hard, the world knows;
"Scripture ancient and modern the same clearly shows;
"To self-int'rest is service of masters opposed;
"To a man blind and deaf love cannot be disclosed.

DOHA 283

"I am under authority; Rama is faithful,
"In all things religious and votive;
"Heed this; then what's best for all and what they wish,
"Be that done—with but love as the motive."

CHAUPAI 294

The fine things Bharat said and the spirit he showed,
By the king and the comp'ny were thus praised aloud:
"Small and few are his words, but their meaning is deep;
"Sweet and easy to hear, hard to follow and keep!
"Tho' your face you can see in the mirror you hold,
"You can't grasp it; like that the great things he has told!'
Then, with Bharat, the king and the saints left, and soon
Came to him whom gods look to as flow'rs to the moon.
At this by new worries the people were harried,
Like fishes to new and unknown waters carried.
The gods in their selfishness too were despondent,
With Bharat to Rama's love wholly respondent,
With Vashishth by deep, strong emotion so moved,
With the love of King Janak so strikingly proved,
And the people completely by Rama's love swayed;
The poor gods! How describe them, so deeply dismayed?

DOHA 284

Indra thoughtfully said, "In the things Rama does
"Love and modesty always prevail;
"We must all get together and some plan devise,
"Or the things that we hope for will fail."

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CHAUPAI 295

To Sar'da the gods all appealed in dejection:
"To you, goddess, must we now come for protection;

"Pray turn Bharat's purposes by your delusion;
"Preserve us by spreading deceitful confusion."

On hearing their selfish and ignorant cries,
The fair goddess replied with these words frank and wise:

"You have asked me the purpose of Bharat to turn;
"Thousand-eyed, yet Mount Meru you cannot discern!

"Brahma, Vishnu and Siva's illusion is great,
"But the purpose of Bharat cannot penetrate;

"You would have me lead him and his purpose astray;
"Can the sun by the moonlight be carried away?

"Sita-Rama in Bharat's heart always reside;
"Where the sun sheds its light, darkness cannot abide."

She returned to Lord Brahma's abode with these words,
But the gods were depressed as at night are day-birds.

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

DOHA 285

The gods, all dejected and selfish, themselves
Planned their evil outrageous devices—
Fear, error, vexation, and suffering—by such
Deceit as for such things suffices.

CHAUPAI 296

These foul things planned Indra; he thought, "Now's the test,
"And in Bharat's hands success or failure must rest."

Raghunath, when King Janak approached him once more,
Gave due honour to him and to all as before.

As those times, the council, and duty demanded,
Vashishth to them spoke and attention commanded;

He told them what Bharat and Janak had said,
And repeated the fine things that Bharat had pled;

Then he added, "Now Rama, your wishes pray tell;
"I am sure all will do them and all will be well."

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Rama rev'rently listened to every word,
Then an answer he gave that rejoiced all who heard:
"Before you, sir, and Mithila's king I should deem
"It unworthy to say much; presumptuous 'twould seem;
"If both you and the king your command on me lay,
"I take oath, sir, whatever it be, I'll obey."

DOHA 286

The saint and the king, and those with them, were all
Taken back, as they heard Rama's oath;
They expectantly looked toward Bharat, but answer
To Rama none gave—all were loath.

CHAUPAI 297

Bharat saw the assembly confused and restrained;
Rama's brother indeed, self-control he regained;
His emotion he checked—time unfitting and strange—
As Agastya once lowered the great Vindhya range.¶
When grief ravished their minds, as the Demon the Earth,
Then again from Earth's womb came perfection to birth;
Bharat's wisdom, as once on a time the great Boar
Came to save, wrought a mighty deliv'rance once more.
Thus to Rama, his teacher, the saints and the king
Bowing rev'rently, Bharat his plea sought to bring:
"Forgive me, if now I unmannerly utter
"Things harsh with a voice soft and soothing as butter."
Within he sought Sar'da; she rose from that lake,
That her seat on his lotus-like mouth she might take;
Like a swan dropping pearls, there then fell from his mouth
Words of modesty, righteousness, wisdom and truth.†

¶ To make the daily passage of the sun easier.
† In this stanza several old legends are used as picturesque illustrations.

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DOHA 287

With the eyes of discernment he saw them all there
Overcome by love to the last man;
With respectful salute, and remembering Sita
And Rama, his plea he began:

CHAUPAI 298

"Father, mother, friend, teacher, art thou to me, Lord;
"All-discerning, All-Gracious, revered and adored;

"True and pure; worthy Master; perfection's deep mine;
"Guardian of all who seek thee, all-knowing, divine;

"Upon all who trust in thee thy strength good bestows,
"Right sustains, but all evil and wrong overthrows;

"None your equal, my Lord, you in grace stand alone;
"I alone am my equal in evil, I own.

"I the word of my father and master infringed,
"Coming here with my people; my mind was unhinged;

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

"Here earth holds high and low, good and ill, love and strife,
"Death with poison, and nectar with eternal life;

"But I never have heard of or seen any one,
"By whom, even in thought, Rama's will is undone;

"Yet as loving service for you has been counted
"My obstinate pride that to these heights has mounted!

DOHA 288

"And thus, my dear Lord, by your kindness and goodness,
"My follies my blessings became;
"My vices were made to seem rich and rare jewels,
"And round me spreads far my good name.

CHAUPAI 299

"The scriptures all sing and the world owns the brightness
"That shines in your greatness and gracious uprightness;

"Men evil and cruel, perverse and low-minded,
"Sin-hardened and godless ones, by meanness blinded,

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"If they come before you, your mercy imploring,
"You make them your own, their respect thus restoring;

"Their faults seeing, never you harbour or name them;
"But of their good hearing, as saints you proclaim them!

"No master the good of his servants advances
"Like you, or their worth and their glory enhances!

"You never give thought to your own mighty doing,
"But share in your servant's regrets and sad rueing.

"With hand raised aloft, you alone do I dare
"As my master to own; there's no other, I swear!

"The parrot may talk, the beast dance; but these creatures
"Depend for their skill upon showmen and teachers.

DOHA 289

"My master his servants respects and uplifts,
"Till among holy saints they are crowned!
"There was never another by whom, against all
"That conflicts, one becomes so renowned!

CHAUPAI 300

"Whether childishness, sorrow, or love be the cause,
"I have come here not heeding, but breaking your laws;

"Yet in kindness you've welcomed me here as your friend,
"And my good you have sought from beginning to end.

"I see my Lord's feet, source of every blessing,
"His goodness well knowing, his favour possessing;

"This great gathered throng by good fortune I've met;
"By my sin my Lord's love has been proved greater yet;

"Your kindness and grace give me all that is needed;
"Indeed, what you've done for me need has exceeded!

"My Lord, by your spirit and ways when you aid me,
"Forever your own, bound by love, you have made me.

"I own that my obstinate mind here I showed
"To these great ones, not yielding respect that I owed;

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"Sometimes proud, sometimes humble, I've said my own say;
"But now heed my distress and forgive me, I pray.

DOHA 290

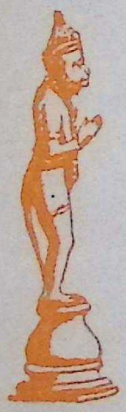
"To say a great deal to a master who's wise,
"Good and friendly does him a great wrong;
"So, my Lord, tell your wishes and thus set me right
"Where I fail, where I'm weak make me strong.

CHAUPAI 301

"I swear by the dust of my Lord's lotus feet,
"Of all happiness, truth and well-doing the seat;
"From my heart I am speaking, when this claim I make,
"That this one thing I wish for, asleep or awake—
"To serve my dear Lord with a love true and tender,
"And all aims deceitful and selfish surrender;
"So, help me as servant this wish to fulfil;
"There's no service like doing a good master's will."

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

By love overcome, as his thoughts he delivered,
His eyes swam with tears and his young body quivered;
As on Rama's lotus-like feet he took hold,
He expressed such warm love as can never be told.
Then Rama his courteous kindness repeated,
And with his own hand at his side Bharat seated;
At Bharat's fine spirit and words, well-nigh dumb
Were both he and those gathered, by love overcome.



CHHAND 12

From their love well-nigh faint, Were both he and the saint,
With the king and the nobles assembled;
Their hearts they all raised, Bharat gladly they praised,
That his brother he loved and resembled;
The gods too applauded, With flowers, and lauded
The prince, tho' at heart they were pained;
But, as shunning the light, Lilies close up at night,
So the people were sad and restrained.

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SORATHA 10

On seeing the people so saddened
In both the groups gathered there, both men and women,
Lord Indra, depressed and nigh maddened,
To gain his own pleasure the dead thought of killing!

CHAUPAI 302

Chief god, yet deceitful and vile ways pursuing!
He loves his own ends and another's undoing!

He is always in enmity, mean and unjust,
Like a crow, false and dirty, whom no one can trust!

He himself first the plan of his falsehood designed,
Then on others the burden and blame tried to bind.

Tho' the gods tried their best the poor folks to deceive,
Yet bound to him in love not one Rama would leave;

All unsettled in mind, by uncertainty vext,
They one moment would stay, want to go home the next;

Between two things divided, their minds were perturbed,
As the water where stream and sea meet is disturbed;

Torn this way and that, not one found satisfaction,
Nor told what he thought, or his cause for distraction.

The Kindly One saw this and inwardly smiled,
Thinking "Indra is dog-like, so crafty and wild."

DOHA 291

Only Bharat and Janak, the ministers, saints
And wise nobles remained unaffected;
By illusive pow'r of the gods, as it found them,
The minds of the rest were deflected.

CHAUPAI 303

The Fountain of Love saw them worried and worn,
Between Indra's deceit and love for himself torn.

Upon ministers, priests, king and teacher, as well
As the people, cast Bharat's devotion its spell;

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There like statues they sat, as at Rama they gazed,
And as hesitant parrot-like voices they raised.

Bharat's humbleness, greatness and love to imbibe
As we hear it is pleasant, but hard to describe;

A small fraction seeing of his warm devotion,
Great saints and the king almost drowned in love's ocean;

Then how can poor Tulsi e'er tell of its glory?
By faith's pow'r alone my heart knows the glad story;

I know myself weak, and his glory how great!
In the comp'ny of bards I may well hesitate!

His virtues my tongue cannot tell, tho' 'tis eager;
My mind speaks in words that are childlike and meagre.

DOHA 292

A brilliant full moon is Prince Bharat's fair fame,
In sincere hearts now risen and present;
Upon it my mind ever fixedly gazing,
Is just like a rapt spell-bound pheasant.

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

CHAUPAI 304

To tell Bharat's spirit no scripture is fitted;
So poets, forgive me, uncertain dull-witted;

If of Bharat's nature one tells or is told,
Sita-Rama's dear feet will his heart ever hold;

If remembering Bharat, a man finds it hard
To love Rama, for him ev'ry good thing is barred.

There and then Rama saw them, the Lord ever kind,
He who well knows his servant's true spirit and mind,

Firm support of religion, in wise dealing skilled,
Mighty ocean with truth, love and helpfulness filled.

True love and true justice forever upholding,
That gathering, time and condition beholding,

He spoke to them words in most eloquent voice,
Full of blessing, with pow'r to make hearers rejoice:

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"By you, Bharat, religion is staunchly sustained,
"Laws of scripture and common life ably maintained.

DOHA 293

"Pure, unsullied in every thought, word and deed,
"Like to you in these things there's no other;
"Where teachers are gathered in evil times, how
"Sing the praise of one's own younger brother?

CHAUPAI 305

"Well known are the laws of the Sun-Race to you,
"And the loving renown to a loyal sire due;

"This gath'ring, these times, the respect due to teachers,
"The mind's evil, good and indifferent features—

"The secrets of all are by you understood,
"And for me and yourself what is both right and good.

"Yet, while placing in you full and confident trust,
"As conditions now call for it, answer I must;

"Since our father, my brother, has gone, our affairs
"Are maintained by our fam'ly guide's kindness and pray'rs;

"If not, ev'rybody—townsmen and relations,
"And we too, would be in distressing conditions;

"If ever the lord of day sank out of season,
"The world would be troubled and ask for the reason.

"Divine fate has set all these troubles before us,
"But Mithila's king and the saint bear them for us.

DOHA 294

"The kingdom's affairs and its ruler's fair name,
"Our religion, wealth, homesteads and land,
"These our master will care for and all will be well
"In the end, firmly still all will stand.

CHAUPAI 306

"With our people, his favour sustains you and me
"In our homes, in the forest, wherever it be;

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"The things that our parents and teachers have told us,
"Like th' earth and the serpent, in virtue uphold us;

"Obey these things, therefore; me likewise enable,
"In keeping our kingdom and race strong and stable.

"The one means is this of all worthy successes;
"Thus fame, goodness, wealth one united possesses;

"Consider this well, coming troubles endure,
"And for fam'ly and people their welfare secure;

"All we brothers the trouble and suff'ring will share,
"But the heaviest load all these years you must bear.

"I must say things severe, tho' I know you are young;
"It is not I, my brother, but times that are wrong;

"In bad times and places true brothers are tested,
"As strokes of a sword by the hand are arrested."

DOHA 295

The servant is known by his hands, feet and eyes,
But the lord by his voice and his tone;
All the poets, says Tulsi, who hear this account
Of true love its high praises will own.

JANAK ARRIVES AT CHITRAKUTA

CHAUPAI 307

All the gathered assembly, as Rama they heard
In his nectar-sweet voice give this love-inspired word,

Were absorbed in love's trance, all unconscious and numb;
Even Sar'da herself seeing them was struck dumb.

Blame and suff'ring dispelled, and his lord at his side,
Bharat now was at peace and his heart satisfied;

Gladness shone in his face, no more grief his mind held;
As when dumb men find voices, their dumbness dispelled.

Then again Bharat lovingly reverence showed,
And said, clasping his lotus-like hands as he bowed:

"My birth now, my lord, in this world fruit is showing;
"I'm happy as tho' with you too I were going;

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"Whatever in kindness to me you command,
"I will hon'rably heed it as your love's demand;
"But pray give me your aid—this the one thing I ask—
"That the full fourteen years I may hold to my task.

DOHA 296

"My lord, I have brought holy water to use
"In anointing you when you are crowned;
"So pray tell me, what now shall be done with the water
"From pilgrimage places renowned?

CHAUPAI 308

"Furthermore, one great longing I have in my mind,
"But the courage to tell of it now do not find."
Said Rama, "No longer, my brother, withhold it."
Commanded thus, Bharat in loving tones told it:
"I'm eager to see, if consent you will give,
"Chitrakut's woods and shrines where the saintly ones live;
"The beautiful birds and beasts, woods, streams and fountains,
"And chiefly your footprints that mark now these mountains."
Said Rama, "Permission of Atri the saint
"First obtain, then go wand'ring, no need of restraint;
"By the saintly one's favour, this forest bestows
"Its pure joy, as delightful fresh beauty it shows;
"Then the pure holy water pour out on the land,
"Where the chief of the hermits may give his command."
As these words Rama spoke, at the feet Bharat bowed
Of the hermit, and joy deep and thankful avowed.

DOHA 297

This talk between Bharat and Rama is now
The true source of all blessing and grace;
When they heard it, the self-centered gods rained down flowers
And praised the Sun-fam'ly and race.

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CHAUPAI 309

They eagerly cried out again and again,
"Hail to Bharat and Rama, long may they both reign!"
With Vashishth and King Janak those gathered rejoiced,
And their praise of the things Bharat said frankly voiced;
All enraptured, Videha his voice loudly raised,
As the virtues and love of the brothers he praised:
"Both charming and good are they, master and servant;
"Their love is in all ways most pure and most fervent."
The members and ministers gathered uplifted
Their praises, each as he was minded and gifted;
In both groups their joy and their sorrow were blended,
As Rama and Bharat their mutual words ended.
Both sorrow and joy seemed Kausalya to fill,
As the queens she instructed of both good and ill;
As some praised their Lord Rama with happiest pride,
Others Bharat's great goodness and love glorified.

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

DOHA 298

Then said Atri to Bharat, "Quite close to the mountain,
"A well you will find clear and deep;
"Into that pour your pure sacred water; 'tis worthy
"So holy an off'ring to keep."

CHAUPAI 310

Bharat took Atri's counsel with happy intent;
To that well all the vessels of water he sent;
Shatrughna, the hermits and saintly ones followed
With Bharat himself, to that well deep and hallowed;
That pure holy water he cast in the well,
While saint Atri exclaimed under love's happy spell,
"This from time immemorial was known as a place
"Truly sacred, but of it in time men lost trace,

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"Till my servants its value and beauty descried,
"And this well made, that water might thus be supplied;
"Divine thought now the world from things difficult frees,
"And a great sacred duty can be done with ease;
" 'Bharat's well' by all people it now will be named,
"For its water from all sacred places acclaimed;
"Whosoever in faith and in love here will lave,
"Perfect cleansing in thought, word and deed will receive."

DOHA 299

Then still praising the well and its glory, they all
To where Rama was waiting returned;
Atri told him the virtue that in this and all
Sacred places might well be discerned.

CHAUPAI 311

Religion's great stories with favour discussing,
Dawn broke again, night for them happily passing;
Shatrughna and Bharat, morn's duties completed,
By Rama and Sita and Vashishth permitted,
With all of their comp'ny and simply attired,
Went on foot to see Rama's wood as they desired.

The Earth, seeing Bharat's feet unshod and tender,
Became soft and yielding in happy surrender;
All dry grass and thorns, pebbles, stones and hot dust,
All things piercing and harsh, into hiding she thrust;
Thus the road became easy, the ground clean and soft,
While around them blew cool, fragrant winds from aloft;
Flowers fell from the gods, clouds above gave them shade,
Blooming trees and soft grass yet more happiness made;
Shy deers watched them, and birds began softly to sing,
All to Rama's belov'd eager service to bring.

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DOHA 300

'Tis no great thing that on Bharat, Rama's beloved,
Such brightness and happiness dawns;
And man wins to easy success, saying "Rama!
"O Rama!"—yes, when he but yawns!

CHAUPAI 312

Thro' the woods happy Bharat his purpose pursued;
Seeing his loving ways, hermit saints were subdued;

He saw trees and plants, woods and groves, living creatures,
Saw plots of land, pools too, with marked sacred features.

Whenever he saw some select holy place,
He enquired of its origin, meaning and grace;

Hermit Atri replied to his questions, and told
Of the origin, name, marks and pow'r from of old.

In some places he worshipped, in others he bathed,
In some sitting down as the hermit directed,

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

In some gazed at the beauty with which there enswathed.
On Rama and Sita and Lakshman reflected;

The gods of the woods saw and happily blessed
The fine spirit of service and love he expressed;

Till the end of the third watch he wandered each day,
Then returned, love's respects to Lord Rama to pay.

DOHA 301

For Bharat, in seeing these places so charming
And sacred, five days quickly went;
Then in talking and hearing of Vishnu and Siva,
One whole day till ev'ning was spent.

CHAUPAI 313

The next day after bathing—Tirhut's king here yet—
With the hermits and princes the councillors met;

Rama, knowing the day one of great and good choice,
In his kindness refrained from uplifting his voice;

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At Bharat—the king—Vashishth—looked, hesitated,
Then cast his eyes downward and quietly waited.

The councillors praised him, this thought in their mind,
"Careful master as he nowhere else could we find."

Bharat, thoughtful and wise, Rama's wishes perceived,
And arose, loving courage now fully achieved;

Humbly bowing, hands clasped, he said, "Truly, my lord,
"To my every wish you have given accord;

"For me you accepted this great self-denial;
"For me you endure severe suff'ring and trial;

"So give your command, my lord; now with no fears
"I'll return and in Avadh serve full fourteen years.

DOHA 302

"But, O Merciful One, kind protector of Avadh,
"Pray tell me a plan that is sure,
"By which, after the full fourteen years of this service,
"Your dear feet I'll gaze on once more.

CHAUPAI 314

"Your own citizens, subjects and kinsmen—all dear—
"Are bound to you by love that is warm and sincere;

"Pain and sorrow are good if for you they are borne;
"Without you heav'n itself were an object to scorn!

"My good master, in truth to you all things are known,
"All the doings, the aims and desires of your own.

"Protector of suppliants, watch each direction;
"Both here and at home with us grant your protection;

"I'll live then with confidence in this one thing,
"That if thoughtfully done, deeds no worry will bring.

"It was my own distress and my lord's kind forbearing,
"Together, that made me so wilful and daring;

"My guilt and your doubt of me cast from your mind,
"And a true servant's vocation teach me to find."

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They praised Bharat's plea—like the swan now deciding,
And water-like error from truth's milk dividing.

DOHA 303

His brother's pray'r hearing, so humble and yet
Of hypocrisy showing no trace,
Rama, all wise and merciful, answered in words
Fitting time and conditions and place.

CHAUPAI 315

CONVERSATION OF RAMA AND BHARAT

"Both the king and our teacher will watch for the good
"Of us both and our people—at home, in this wood;

"They are over us, and if we heed them, no harm
"Can come sleeping or waking, no cause for alarm;

"For us both greatest good and the most manly role,
"Highest fame, duty here, and our ultimate goal,

"Lie in this, that we follow our father's command;
"That is kingship's ideal, law and scripture's demand;

"Who parents and teachers obeys, and refuses
"All else, treads a gainful way, naught of good loses.

"Consider this, shun vain regrets and be firm
"In your duty to Avadh throughout this long term;

"Care of family, treasury, people and realm
"Light as dust from saints' feet will be, you at the helm;

"Mother's, teacher's and ministers' guidance observe;
"Thus your people, your kingdom and country preserve."

DOHA 304

The monarch should be like the mouth, the one member
That does all the eating and drinking,
Yet all of the body sustains and preserves;
This is Tulsi's word—after much thinking.

CHAUPAI 316

In this lies the whole law and duty of kings,
As the mind hides within many much-wanted things.

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In this way Rama greatly his brother consoled;
But for peace Bharat's mind sought some symbol to hold.

Rama lovingly called Bharat's spirit to mind,
With his council and teacher, help seeking to find;

Then on Bharat his sandals he gladly bestowed;
On his head Bharat placed them and rev'rence thus showed.

Not sandals were these merely, but kindly servers
Of his people's welfare, their soul's twin preservers!

A casket to hold Bharat's love as a gem!
The two letters that save ev'ry soul—R and M!¶

They are doors to our good, oped by hands of good deeds,
Seen by pure eyes of worship and service of needs!

Bharat gladly received this symbolic support,
As tho' to Rama-Sita he thus could resort.

DOHA 305

Then he bowed and asked leave to go home; to his heart
His young brother in love Rama clasped;
But the mind of the people perverse Indra worried,
A chance to upset, which he grasped.

BHARAT RETURNS TO AVADH

CHAUPAI 317

But this evil design turned out well in the end,
Thoughts to Rama's return it could hopefully bend;

But for this hope the people had all died meanwhile,
Sick from Sita and Rama and Lakshman's exile;

Rama's goodness true profit and helpfulness lent
To things done by perverse gods with harmful intent.

The brothers embraced with arms fully extended;
Amazing love in their embracing was blended;

Swept by strong emotion—mind, body and soul,
Rama seemed for a moment to lose self-control.

¶ Meaning "Rama"—the vowels being included in the consonants.

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Seeing tears from his eyes in warm rivulets flow,
Gathered gods their deep sympathy too tried to show;

Even Janak, the teachers and hermits were moved,
Souls in wisdom's fires tested and finest gold proved,

By this world's illusion and snare undeflected,
As are lotus petals from water protected.

DOHA 306

Yes, even they, seeing the great love of Rama
And Bharat, unequalled, unbounded,
In spite of their thoughtful control of themselves,
Seemed in thought, word and deed all confounded.

CHAUPAI 318

When Janak and Vashishth were swayed in this fashion,
'Twere wrong to describe it as mere common passion.

When hearing how Rama and Bharat were parted,
The hearers will call the poor poet hard-hearted;

BHARAT RETURNS TO AVADH

In telling it, therefore, his tongue hesitates,
And their love at that time with reluctance relates.

Rama lovingly Bharat for counsel detained;
To his heart then Shatrughna he eagerly strained.

The servants and ministers, having permission,
Each went to the work of his place and position.

In both groups the news caused the people to grieve,
As they sadly began preparations to leave.

The two brothers at Rama's feet bowed and set out,
To his will their heads bending, hearts humbly devout;

To the forest gods, hermits and saints they displayed
Their true reverence, as for their blessing they prayed.

DOHA 307

After farewells to Lakshman, to Sita they bowed,
Placed the dust from her feet on their heads;
Then the journey began, hearing often the blessing
That on all true happiness sheds.

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CHAUPAI 319

Then Rama with Lakshman, King Janak addressed,
And their thanks for his goodness thus humbly expressed:

"You have suffered, my lord, in your kindness much pain,
"Having come to us here in the woods with your train;

"Your blessing now give and return to your city."
The king set out, patient with courage and pity.

The brothers bid farewell to priests, saints and sages,
With honours as tho' to great gods of the ages;

They went to the queen-mothers, due respect paid them,
Were blest, and then came back, farewell having bade them;

To each relative, minister, citizen,
Vamadev, Visvamitra and other great men,

They accorded respect, to each one as was due;
Sincere humble farewells were thus paid by these two;

Ev'ry woman and man, of whatever estate,
Rama honoured, in kindness himself truly great.

DOHA 308

Then he thoughtfully went to Kaikeyi and said
To her also a loving farewell,
In her palanquin seated her, and all her worry
And sorrow thus sought to dispel.

CHAUPAI 320

Her farewells to her parents and kinsfolk all said,
To the love of her loved one again Sita sped;

Farewell to the queen-mothers paid, their hearts swelling
With love—to this poet 'tis not joyous telling;

As counsel and blessing once more they rehearsed,
Sita seemed in the love of both fam'lies immersed;

For their close-curtained palanquins Rama then called
And each queen in her seat with due comfort installed;

Again and again, as they left them, the mothers
Were bid alike loving farewell by the brothers.

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Thus Janak and Bharat set out with their troops;
Riders, elephants, horses and cars in both groups.

The people departed, hearts anxious and aching,
Within Rama, Sita and Lakshman all taking;

Dejected beasts moved—horses, elephants, mules—
Not by choice, but by power that animals rules.

DOHA 309

Rama, Sita and Lakshman once more to the saint
And his wife paid their humble respects;
They returned to their simple huts moved by amazement
And joy at this meeting's effects.

CHAUPAI 321

The boatman, with honour dismissed, then departed;
Himself, as he left them, distressed and sad-hearted.

Kols, Bhils and Kirats—in the jungle they dwell—
Were dismissed and went off with reluctant farewell.

BHARAT RETURNS TO AVADH

Rama, Sita and Bharat sat on in the shade,
By the loss of their dear ones despondent now made;

Rama told them of things that should make them rejoice,
Told of Bharat's affectionate spirit and voice;

Of his trustful devotion in thought, deed and word
Rama spoke, moved by love; their hearts warmed as they heard.

For all creatures on Chitrakut, moving or stilled,
Human, un-human, gladness by grieving was killed.

Seeing Rama's condition, the gods offered praise,
And the need of each sorrowing realm sought to raise;

So he gave them respectful assurance, and they
Free from worry and fear went their own happy way.

DOHA 310

While with Lakshman and Sita in that simple hut
Made of leaves and grass Rama remained,
Self-denial, devotion and wisdom it seemed
Were embodied and quietly reigned.

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CHAUPAI 322

Brahmans, teachers and saints, Bharat too and the king
Felt their leaving of Rama a most mournful thing;

On the virtues of Rama they found time to brood,
As in silence their way to their homes they pursued.

They spent the first day without food in a fast,
Until all to the Yamuna's far bank had passed;

With the service of Guha, the lord's boatman friend,
They all crossed the Ganges by the second day's end;

Crossed the Sai, then bathed in Gomati's fair stream,
And to Avadh the fourth day they all safely came.

Janak stayed in the city four days, took in hand
The affairs of the realm and its government planned;

To Vashishth, Bharat and each official concerned
Gave his charge; with his band then to Tirhut returned.

Thus the people in Avadh, King Rama's own town,
As by Vashishth advised settled quietly down.

DOHA 311

They all gave up their ornaments, pleasures and comforts;
With one earnest longing they fasted,
That they might see Rama again; that hope kept them
Alive while the exile term lasted.

CHAUPAI 323

The servants and ministers, by Bharat guided,
Performed well the task their position provided.

To Shatrughna Bharat gave charge, 'twas the care
Of the queen-mothers always and everywhere;

Then the Brahmans he called for, their blessing to ask,
And—hands folded—their guidance he prayed for his task:

"To the high-placed and low, in great matters or small,
"Give your orders, nor hesitate on them to call."

He called up the citizens and his relations,
And settled all satisfied in happy stations;

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With Shatrughna then to Vashishth's house he went,
And, hands clasped, said as humbly before him he bent,

"I will, if you permit me, an austere life live."
The saint thrilled as he said, his permission to give,

"Well I know, in whatever you think, do, or speak,
"What the world knows as right and good always you seek."

DOHA 312

Bharat sent for astrologers, fixed on a day
With saint Vashishth's advice and approval,
Then placed on the throne Rama's sandals to stay
Always there, without change or removal.

CHAUPAI 324

To Vashishth and Kausalya homage first paying,
And orders from Lord Rama's sandals obeying,

This pillar of faith built himself a leaf hut
At near-by Nandigram, and then lived in that spot;

BHARAT RETURNS TO AVADH

Hermit's clothing he donned, in a knot his hair bound,
On a bed of grass slept spread upon the bare ground;

Himself by devout loving vows he restricted,
And stern rules in clothes, food and posture inflicted;

The pleasures of ornaments, comforts and dress
He gave up, as tho' mere blades of grass—even less!

The great kingdom of Avadh himself Indra praised,
And its riches the God of Wealth's jealousy raised;

Yet close by it, unheeding, unmoved, Bharat dwelt;
No attraction, like bees among *champas*,¶ he felt.

If a man, greatly blest, for but Lord Rama yearns,
Lakshmi's pleasures and treasures like offal he spurns.

DOHA 313

This in Bharat was no great thing, for Rama's love
Satisfaction and fulness afforded;

¶ A strong-scented flower, but unattractive to bees.

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The quail and the swan both are praised for the need
And discernment about them recorded.

CHAUPAI 325

Altho' in his body he grew thinner daily,
His vigour and strength stayed, his face still shone gaily;

By vows and devotion to Rama well nourished,
His mind was unclouded, his faithfulness flourished;

As in the cold season, tho' waters decrease,
In its sight lilies blossom and rushes increase.

In his soul—a clear heaven—like stars shining fair,
Were restraint, temp'rance, purity, peacefulness, pray'r;

Fourteen years the full-moon day, his faith the pole star,
Thoughts of Rama the Milky Way stretching afar,

And his love for his lord the moon, undimmed, unchanged,
Around which in its purity bright stars were ranged.

Any poet might hesitate, singing the praise
Of the life Bharat lived, of his thoughts and his ways,

Of his love, self-control, all his virtues' pure glory;
The tongues of divine ones could not tell the story.

DOHA 314

Overflowing with love, all his worship and trust
In the sandals of Rama reposed;
Daily seeking their wishes and guidance, of all
The affairs of the state he disposed.

CHAUPAI 326

Always thrilled, Sita-Rama enthroned in his heart;
As he uttered their name, to his eyes tears would start.

Rama, Sita and Lakshman now lived in the wood;
Still at home, Bharat gave up much bodily good.

Men said, as their thoughts went out in each direction,
"High praise is due Bharat for noble perfection."

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Ascetics abashed heard of his self-denial,
And saints were ashamed as they watched him in trial.

His ways were the purest, delightful and charming,
The source of true bliss, death of all things alarming;

Sun-like, against falsehood's night fierce war they wage,
And destroy sins and sorrows of this Evil Age;

Herds of elephant evils these lions disperse;
Fevers quelling, the soul into healthy life nurse;

Relieve of all burdens, give all that is pleasant;
The essence of life; Rama's love always present.

CHHAND 13

If by life from above, For Sita-Rama's love
Athirst, Bharat had not come to birth,
There is never a saint, Could attain full restraint,
Patience, purity, peace on this earth.

There is none that in guise, Of the famous and wise,
Can o'ercome suff'ring, poverty, sin;
In this Dark Age I swear, Yes, I Tulsi declare;
But by him Rama's presence we'll win.

BHARAT RETURNS TO AVADH

SORATHA 13

Tulsi says, If with earnest desire
Any man will to Bharat's ways rev'rently listen,
Distaste for this world he'll acquire,
And a love for the fair feet of Sita and Rama.

HERE ENDS THE SECOND BOOK, NAMED
EVENTS IN AVADH,
The Second Stairway
of the Lake of Lord Rama's Life and Deeds,
which destroys all evil of this Evil Age.

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